



法神降临

游戏

墨乡 | 作品



by Mo Xiang

Advent of the Archmage



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Advent of the Archmage

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Chapter 451

Following the Guidance of the Soul

Link's mission was to save Silverstar's soul, but he couldn't reveal that because it was an alert from the game system. He also couldn't prove that Silverstar's soul was still alive. No one would believe him if he said that, so he had planned to complete this mission while the entire team was fighting against the Void Tyrant.

But now, there was a cry for help, and he couldn't determine if it was real or not. Link was conflicted.

What if it was a trap and he led the entire team there? But if he didn't go—what if it was real? Silverstar understood the Void Tyrant well. If Link could save her, it would be much more possible to defeat the Void Tyrant.

There was another question. Why did Silverstar only call to him for help?

There were many possible explanations. For example, maybe she was too weak, or Link had saved her before, so he received her soul's recognition. Or maybe this was the Void Tyrant's evil plan. Link couldn't determine the validity with pure logic.

He needed to follow the guidance of his own heart. Just like that time at the Dragon Valley's Mist Maze, he should let his soul tell him the correct choice.

His soul's voice was very weak; it couldn't be disturbed at all. Link took a deep breath. Without thinking about anything, he calmed his mind and continued to listen.

After a few seconds, Link's mind was completely still. All worries, fears, and other emotions had smoothed over. He entered a state of complete peace.

Then he suddenly heard the cries. I'm here, I'm here, I'm here. Save me.

The voice was wispy, lost, and very soft. It was like a spider web floating in the wind; it could be broken at any time.

Now, Link was sure that this was definitely Silverstar's soul!

He turned to look at Gretel and saw her brows tightly knitted. There was worry in her eyes. She was definitely worrying about the future of the dragon race and the power of the enemy. She was worrying... There were too many distracting thoughts in her mind.

If the queen was like that, the elders and Dragon Soul Guards must be even worse off. They must be anxious and unsettled. How could they hear these soft cries for help in that state?

He understood. Silverstar must have started off calling to everyone, but only I could hear her, so she only calls to me now.

Thinking of this, Link said to Gretel, "A voice in my heart tells me that Silverstar is still alive. We must save her. This will be a great help in defeating against the Void Tyrant."

"Are you sure?" Gretel stared into Link's eyes. Her crystal-red eyes were unblinking behind the dragon helmet.

Link was technically the commander of the team. At this time, his one mistake could kill all of them. Gretel was already showing great trust in him by not directly disagreeing with him.

Link looked back confidently. "I'm sure!"

Gretel nodded. "Alright. Take us to her."

She was handing him the fate of her race. Taking a deep breath, Link called, "Warriors, follow me!"

The voice was coming from the south of the small city. Link led the team southward.

There was a small lake near the south of the city, so there were many creeks. After a while, Link discovered that the black aura was much thinner by the creeks. He could see up to 30 feet. There were less translucent dancing tentacles too.

He didn't know why but he could still take advantage of it.

"Follow the river. Do you hear the water? Follow the sound of the water and don't get lost!" Link called.

The creek wasn't very long—only around 3000 feet. The soldiers walked along the bank. With the target clear, they finished within ten minutes. A lake appeared at the end of the creek.

There was a small dam between the creek and lake; the group walked over to the dam. The black fog in the air had thinned more. The visibility was up to 60 feet.

Here, Link could hear the cries very clearly. Silverstar's soul must be around here!

At that time, a Warrior pointed at the water below the dam and called, "Look, there's something in the water!"

Everyone looked over, including Link. Using the Vision of Truth for help, he could see more clearly than the others.

He saw a mess of semi-transparent tentacles near the top of the water. There were at least 3000 tentacles. They flew around and practically covered the entire water surface. However, using the Vision of Truth, Link still saw a ball of weak light in the water under the tentacles.

"Those tentacles are afraid of water. Did Silverstar use the water to escape death?" Link was excited. He could clearly feel the strong soul aura from the water.

Gretel felt this too. She looked to Link with some happiness in her eyes.

"There's something there. I'll go check!"

And then plop, Link jumped straight into the water from the dam.

The water in the Soul Realm was freezing in an eerie, bone-chilling way. Despite his physical strength, Link still shuddered when he entered the water. The tentacles on the surface discovered him and sped over. Link immediately went underwater.

Whoosh, whoosh. There was wind from above the water, but no tentacle entered to attack him. These guys really were scared of water!

The Vision of Truth was equally effective underwater. Link looked side to side and saw the faintly glowing soul floating before him. At the same time, the voice in his mind was clearer. I'm here, I'm here.

Link swam over with all his might. When he was closer, he was even surer that this was Lucia Silverstar!

She had silver hair, silver eyes, and snowy-white skin. Her body was slightly transparent, showing this was a soul, but she was much solidified and had clear contours. Only a Legendary figure could reach this extent.

Because she was a soul, she had no clothes. Floating in the water without moving in a fetal position, she looked like a corpse at first glance.

Link continued swimming. Beside the sacred soul, he discovered that she was half-asleep. She didn't react to him at all. The only change was that the voice in Link's mind grew much stronger.

I'm here, I'm here, the voice kept calling. She seemed to be repeating it subconsciously.

Link wasn't worried. He had found her. As long as he brought her back, he'd find a way to save her.

He touched the soul lightly. It felt like he touched something soft, like jello or glue. If Link used a bit more pressure, his entire hand would sink in.

So this is a soul's substance. An ordinary mortal's soul would probably just be a puff of smoke, right? Link thought. He carefully cupped his hand around the soul and swam away from the city without breaking through the surface.

At the dam, Gretel sensed Link's movements, as well as Silverstar's soul. Looking at the dancing tentacles on the surface, she waved her hand. "Let's go," she said to the Warriors. "We'll go into the water too and leave this place first."

Plop, plop. The dozens of Red Dragon Warriors and the queen jumped in together. They followed Link and swam forward.

After around 3000 feet, there was a small island. Link carried Silverstar's soul up. The Red Dragon Queen followed him onto land too.

Link wasn't familiar with souls. The soul wasn't wearing any clothes either, so Silverstar was naked now. He carried her and looked awkwardly at Gretel. "I got her, but she seems to be hurt. Do you know what to do?"

He had not looked deep into the category of souls. The only knowledge Link had was from Secret Magicians like Vance and Eleanor, but it was all basic stuff.

"Hand her to me."

Gretel took Silverstar's soul from Link's hands. At the same time, a watery crystal-red light appeared in her hands. The light dripped into the soul. Slowly, a red haze appeared in the white soul.

Ah, save me, save me, save me. She started struggling and instinctively cried for help.

Gretel patted Silverstar's cheeks gently and murmured, "Wake up, wake up. It's safe."

After a dozen taps, Silverstar's body convulsed, and she finally woke up. Opening her eyes, she yelled, "Hurry, stop him! He's starting to split!"

"Split?" Gretel was terrified at that.

"Yes!" Silverstar urged. "His body is at the limit already. He'll split into a new body and continue sucking power. You have to kill him before he finishes splitting!"

With that, a message flashed past Link's vision.

Mission Completed: Rescue

Player receives 10 Jogu.

Player receives 100 Omni Points.

Activate Second Step: Restriction Transfer

Mission Content: Use Magician Lucia Silverstar's knowledge to restrain the Void Tyrant's power and mobility.

Mission Reward 1: 10 Jogu

Mission Reward 2: 200 Omni Points

Link immediately accepted it.

Here, the Red Dragon Queen smiled helplessly. "Unfortunately, we might not be the Void Tyrant's match," she told Silverstar. "He's very strong now."

Link quickly said, "No, there's a way!"

The game system had given a clear prompt. Things had to be done step by step. With their current power, they indeed couldn't go face to face with the Void Tyrant. However, this guy was splitting now and couldn't move around.

They could take advantage of this time to complete the restraint on him and lower his power. Then they could do the next step. This was the correct way.

Hearing this, Gretel's eyes brightened. She looked at Link hopefully. "Tell us."

Link pointed at Silverstar in Gretel's arms. "Our success depends on her!"

Chapter 452

It's Trapped

Dragon Valley, Soul Realm.

Link told his plan to Lucia, who shook her head. "No, I can't do it. I don't have enough power right now. Even at full strength, I don't think I could restrain it. Also, my runes only work in the material realm. It's useless here, but I can't go back to the material realm."

Any normal human would have been desperate at this point. Even an ordinary Magician, upon hearing this, would have thought, 'That's it, it's hopeless.' But Link's first response to this was to think, 'There has to be something we can still do.'

After a few seconds of silence, he spoke. "Miss Silverstar, do you mind sharing the details of your Rune of Principle with me? We'll take it from here. This is Dragon Valley, after all. With the thousands of Red Dragon warriors here, power is something we have in abundance right now."

"No, I don't mind sharing," said Silverstar. "You rescued me, and also, because of me, the Void Tyrant is now rampaging through Dragon Valley. This is the least that I can do, but the structure of my rune is extremely complicated. I fear there may not be enough time for you to master it completely."

"There's no need for us to master it completely. You guide us through it, and we'll follow your lead," said Link.

"But I can't enter the material realm."

On one side, Gretel said reassuringly, "Don't worry, I know a spell called the Spiritual Cloak. It will protect you from any energy turbulence in the material realm."

Uplifted by this, Link motioned at them and said, "If that's the case, let's get started now, shall we?"

With a swoosh, their surroundings regained color once more as they returned to the

material realm.

They were on an island in the middle of the lake south of the city. Looking to the north, they could see endless black vines whipping about, though they still remained in place. It seemed that the Void Tyrant, as Silverstar had explained, was splitting itself into multiple bodies.

Once they were in the material realm again, Silverstar's body suddenly began flickering like a candle in the wind. When exposed to sunlight, her body began emitting green smoke, like she was being roasted alive. Under these circumstances, it seemed that she would only last a minute at most.

"Spiritual Cloak!" Gretel cast the spell in time.

'Hum!' With a soft whir, a thin, red film spread out across Silverstar's spirit. Gleaming slightly, it twisted its shape around her spirit to form a deep red cloak with a hood, completely shielding Silverstar.

Silverstar's body regained stability. Underneath the cloak, she looked almost invisible, like a mere transparent shape beneath the hood.

"Okay, I'm alright." The voice that came from the mantle sounded distant.

With a plan already in mind, Link turned to face the Red Dragon Elders. "This binding spell is large scale, so it will require a considerable amount of power to activate. I'll need all the Red Dragon warriors here, the more the merrier!"

Some of the Red Dragon Elders nodded in reply without question, while others pondered for a bit, looking at the Red Dragon Queen.

Gretel did not immediately give her answer. Instead, she asked Link, "The warriors' power levels are too low. Are you sure that will help?"

"Yes, it will!" said Link confidently. At the same time, he tapped in the air and conjured a lens of Spatial Distortion. "Using the principle of Spatial Collapse, I'll be able to compress anything, other than one's soul, in the realm of Firuman, including Dragon Power!" he explained.

He had once used the distortion of space to level up the power stored within the Light Rune Stone Herrera had given him back in the Skeletal Fort.

At that time, Link had only been a Level-6 Magician, but now, he had reached Legendary, and his accomplishments in Spatial Magic had more than doubled since. Right now, he was confident he could promote normal Dragon Power to Legendary level with ease in order to activate the Rune of Principle.

All Gretel's hesitation faded. "Alright, assemble all our warriors!"

The Red Dragon Elders nodded and transformed into their dragon forms before flying off in all directions to carry out the order.

Link then spoke to Silverstar. "Now then, let's begin."

Silverstar nodded. She had no more strength in her, so she was only able to explain the basis of her spell orally while Link and Gretel listened attentively.

The underlying principle was meticulous. After listening to much of it, Gretel frowned. She was able to understand most of it, but to actually grasp the rune structure and implement it would take more than a few days of practice.

And the thing she lacked most now was time.

She began panicking and soon could not keep up with Lucia's explanations.

'What do we do? What do we do?' As she began to panic, she looked at Link, who was still focused on Lucia's words, just like the time he had proposed his version of the spatial rune back in the great hall.

Seeing this side of Link, Gretel managed to calm down and forced herself to focus and continue paying attention to Lucia's explanations.

Just then, Link whipped out his magic wand and began drawing out thirty-six different types of runes in the air with it. He asked, "Are these the basic rune structures you explained just now?"

Silverstar took a closer look at them, then nodded. "Yes, they're all correct."

Link then added another layer of runes onto the first one, letting them interlace with each other to create a web. "And is this construction of the spell correct?"

Silverstar checked again and nodded, slightly startled. "Yes, it's correct. Have you

learned it before?"

This also drew a curious look from Gretel. Had Link already understood the spell, when Lucia Silverstar had only just explained the basic principles of it to them? His learning speed was simply incredible.

Link shook his head and explained, "Didn't we battle the Void Tyrant not too long ago? Back then, your binding rune was floating in the air, and I was able to memorize all of it."

He tapped his head and gave a sly smile. "I have a really good memory."

In truth, it was actually the game system that had scanned the whole thing, but to everyone else in the world, it seemed like he was capable of extraordinary feats of memorization.

Silverstar's eyes lit up at this, but just to be sure that Link wasn't making it up, she said, "Show me again, let me see if you have everything right."

Link then proceeded to draw out the rune structure down with every detail that he remembered seeing before. When he drew the 20th rune layer, Silverstar shouted with glee, "That's enough, now all that's left is to redraw the whole structure. I don't see anything wrong with the structures you've drawn. With them, you'll be able to recreate the binding spell that I cast the other day."

Link sighed in relief and turned to face Gretel. "Your Highness, do you remember everything?"

After ten minutes of careful studying Link's runes, she nodded. "No problem. I'll draw them out, see if there's anything wrong with them."

At this point, Link had finished his runes. Watching him take the lead, Gretel had loosened up considerably and began drawing the runes out herself with rapt attention.

Five minutes had passed, and she had finished the 20th layer of runes. Checking her work carefully, she pointed out a few mistakes here and there, letting Gretel fix them. Another five minutes passed, and Silverstar finally nodded in satisfaction. "That's it. You've got it now."

Gretel went through the runes again in her head. She didn't have Link's photographic memory, and so the only thing she could do to make up for it was continuously go through the runes in her head.

Ten minutes later, she nodded, saying, "I'm good."

Link clapped his hands. "We'd best hurry. We have a lot of work ahead of us."

The city's diameter was at least 1,000 feet. This meant that two of them would have to cast a binding spell circle with a diameter of more than 1,500 feet in order to catch the Void Tyrant by surprise.

There was also a certain difficulty to casting rune structures; each rune would have to be imprinted on space itself, and in order to do this, a certain level of spatial power would be required from the caster.

This was not a problem for either Link or Gretel.

Still, it remained an extremely demanding task.

"According to my calculations, the binding formation must be completed in three hours, or else this will all be for nothing," said Lucia. With a time limit hanging over their heads, the difficulty of their task had spiked.

Link and Gretel looked at each other. Without another moment's delay, they began working on the rune structure.

Dragon Power flowed out of them, sending ripples out through the space that then began twisting themselves into runes. The runes flashed for a moment, then dissolved completely in the air.

The two Magicians began weaving the runes together on an invisible canvas like master seamstresses while Lucia Silverstar looked on, watching out for any mistakes they might have made.

Three minutes later, the difference in speed between Link and Gretel became apparent. Link had already finished more than a hundred feet, while Gretel had completed less than thirty feet.

The reason why Link was able to work so quickly was his solid foundation in

enchantment magic, as well as some help from the game system. From his perspective, he was able to see virtual images of the runes exactly as they had been placed in the entire rune structure previously. Link simply followed the images without thinking too much about it.

It made everything that much easier.

Inspecting twenty feet or so of the runes beside Link, Silverstar was able to put her worries to rest. These runes, judging from their detail and arrangement, were nothing short of a masterpiece, and she could not have done any better herself.

She went back to check on Gretel and nodded at her work. Though the Red Dragon Queen's runes were not as elegant as Link's, they met her expectations. Halfway through, she pointed out a couple of mistakes to the queen and waited for her to fix them.

She calculated the likely time of completion. The rune binding circle was approximately 1,500 feet in diameter and 4,700 feet in length, and the rate at which the two were working was sixty feet per minute. If everything went smoothly, they would be able to finish it in half an hour, which would be quick enough.

Time went by, and Link's pace increased gradually, until he was jogging around the circle while working on the runes. Both Silverstar and Gretel looked on in utter horror.

On the other side, Gretel had gotten used to the task and was able to draw out a hundred feet of runes per minute, which was still not enough to catch up to Link.

She then spoke to Lucia. "You better check his work, see if there's nothing wrong with it."

With a look of concern, Silverstar went to check on Link.

Three minutes later, she returned to Gretel's side and spread her hands out. "He's drawing everything way better than I ever could. I couldn't find any fault in his work. Ah, you got this one wrong."

"..." Speechless, Gretel returned to her work.

At this time, the Red Dragon Elders returned with a large number of Red Dragon warriors and a couple of normal dragon masters.

Among the 3,000 people assembled. Most of them were around Level-5, including 1,000 of the high level dragon warriors. The average power level was around Level-6, with Level-7 and Level-8 being the outliers of the group.

Everyone had grouped around the rune circle and waited for its completion, ready to infuse their power into it.

Silverstar then proposed to Gretel, "Link is close to completion on his end, why don't we go back and fix some of the errors you made just now?"

"Okay," said Gretel apologetically. Her pace had been slow, and she had made a lot of mistakes; there was a stark gap between her work and Link's.

Gretel went back to tidy up her work, fixing some of her mistakes here and there. When everything was in order, she continued working on the rest of her runes.

This time, to prevent making any more mistakes, she slowed down her pace, with Silverstar constantly checking her work by her side.

Link, who had already covered half of the city, began approaching Gretel from the other direction.

The two ladies looked at each other in bewilderment.

Within half a minute, Link's runes finally met up with Gretel's.

With a low hum, the runes joined together on both sides, and the whole rune circle lit up slightly, sending a small tremor through the encircled space.

Silver exclaimed excitedly, "You've done it!"

The sudden tremor had startled the Void Tyrant, who was still splitting himself within the city. He let out a roar, "You dare plot against me?"

Silverstar shouted immediately, "Quick, power the rune circle up, he's noticed us!"

Without being powered up, the rune circle was nothing more than an invisible decoration hanging in the air.

Link rushed out of the rune circle and tapped the air with his wand. "Spatial

Distortion!"

In an instant, a ball of Spatial Distortion with a diameter of ten feet appeared twenty feet above ground.

He shouted to the Red Dragon warriors, "Attack the distorted space with all your might! Hold nothing back!"

The Red Dragon warriors were stunned for a moment. They had never received such an order before.

Watching as the black tentacles lashed out from within the city, Gretel herself screamed out an order. "Attack! Use Dragon Slash on it!"

A Red Dragon Elder leapt forward and swung a powerful Dragon Slash at the ball of Spatial Distortion with his sword. A red streak of Dragon Power rushed into the ball, which shimmered for a moment before letting out a highly concentrated thread of Legendary Dragon Power from the other side, directly into the rune circle.

A layer of dim red light spread out across the rune circle. The enclosed space trembled at the same time, and the circle's binding strength increased as a result.

It was effective!

The Red Dragon warriors began directing their attacks into it, while the circle's binding strength increased more and more as a continuous stream of red Dragon Power flowed into it.

But this was not enough. Judging from the Void Tyrant's speed, it was possible he might burst out of the rune circle before its activation. Keeping a wary eye on the black tentacles, Link shouted to the queen, "Your Highness, you must slow down the Void Tyrant by any means necessary! He's too fast!"

The Red Dragon Queen transformed into her dragon form without hesitation, spread her wings in the air, and spewed out an explosive jet of Dragonfire at the front tentacles.

She flew around the outer circle of the city at an incredible speed, continuously pouring Dragonfire down on the mass of tentacles.

The black tentacles regenerated back almost as quickly as they were being burned to crisps, but were still unable to move any closer to the rune circle.

A minute had passed, and all the Red Dragon warriors had tired themselves out, including the Red Dragon Elders, who laid on the ground. They had all used up a great deal of their Dragon Power in their assault.

The rune circle still needed a little more juice to be fully activated. Luckily, Link had enough strength left in him to pick up where the Red Dragons had left off.

With a hum, the air within the circle began to shiver as the rune formation rotated slowly like a gear. The space within the circle then visibly became viscous. The black tentacles that had been lunging outwards moments ago now slowed down considerably, as all their energy had been sapped dry by the rune circle the moment they made contact with it.

"It's trapped! It's finally trapped!" Silverstar shouted excitedly.

Link shared her excitement, too, but his face remained grave, for this was only the beginning. There was still a long way to go until their ultimate victory over the creature!

Chapter 453

Void Hunter

Ding! Ding! Ding!

The moment the Void Tyrant was restrained, Link heard clear dings in his mind. At the same time, a red light flashed in his vision.

Link glanced and saw a bunch of messages.

Mission Complete: Restrain

Player received 10 Jogu

Player received 200 Omni Points

Activate Third Step: Exterminate!

Mission Content: The Void Tyrant is very powerful and can split infinitely. Use the power of the Void ferry to kill it once and for all!

Mission Reward 1: 50 Jogu

Mission Reward 2: Assassin's Dragon King Belt (Legendary)

Note: Complete before the restraint time ends.

Time Remaining: 120 seconds

The Legendary set had re-appeared, along with a countdown of seconds. Each second was precious. Link immediately accepted the mission and ran towards the small city.

As he ran, the Dragon Power inside his body started surging. His body expanded as well. Two seconds later, he transformed into the black dragon.

Whoosh! Link unfurled his wings and soared into the air. During this, there were

various clinks and clanks. Crystal thorns shining like white frost snapped out of his various body parts.

One moment Link's dragon body still looked a bit gentle. The next, he was filled with an aggressive aura.

This time, almost all the strong dragons were present. They all saw the black dragon whose size was comparable to the Red Dragon Queen.

"Black Dragon King?!"

"Master Link is a black dragon?"

"When did we get another powerful dragon?"

Other than the elders who knew the details, the rest were all shocked. They had felt the Dragon Power within Link and found it strange. Now, this sudden plot twist was too hard to accept.

The only happy one in the crowd was probably Felina. She waved her fist, filled with excitement. She was most familiar with Link and knew how powerful he was. It was definitely a good thing for him to be part of the dragon race.

Soaring into the sky, Link charged towards the city center. At the same time, he exclaimed, "Your Highness, use the Void Destructor to clear the way!"

Gretel immediately rose up. While rising, a 30-foot-wide purple ball appeared in the air before her. This was the largest flame spell she'd ever cast.

"Get ready!" She understood Link's plan without needing his explanation.

That moment, Link communicated with the sword spirit inside the Dragon King's Fury in his mind. I need even more powerful strength. Does the Dragon King's Fury effect work on my body?

"Yes, but it's not as effective as your human body. It can only double your strength and raise speed by 50%," said the sword spirit.

That's enough. I'll need it later. Get ready!

"Understood!"

This took less than one-tenth of a second. Then Link called to Gretel in the air, "Your Highness, attack!"

Whoosh! The dark purple Legendary fireball fell from the sky like a meteorite.

On the ground, the Void Tyrant laughed. "Giant lizard, your tricks can't kill me!"

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. Countless black tentacles shot out from all directions, flying towards the fireball's trajectory. Half a second later, they formed a shield 300 feet wide!

The next moment, the Void Destruction fireball crashed onto the shield.

Boom! The collision shook the earth. Flames splashed in all directions, lighting the sky and dying it red. A tidal wave of shockwaves spread out. It crashed into Gretel, sending her tumbling through the sky and almost falling down.

Link was further away from the explosion. He quickly retracted his wings and faced the shockwaves as a front-facing streamline. When the shockwaves reached him, his body shook. He felt numb as if getting struck by lightning. Thankfully, the dragon's body was strong, and he wasn't greatly affected.

He didn't worry about the Red Dragon Warriors outside the city. The restraint runes would quickly weaken the shockwaves.

There was a sea of fire before him now. The black tentacle shield was evaporated by the flames, but they'd blocked most of the fireball's power!

Squinting, Link looked through the flames and saw that the entire city was on fire. The shockwave had turned all the buildings into flatland. However, countless tentacles were still growing in the fire.

They absorbed the fire's energy and shot up like plant shoots after rain. Their speed was dumbfounding. Dealing with these tentacles was useless. They could only defeat this Void creature by getting to the heart.

The Void Tyrant's voice rang out. "Haha, you insects, what other tricks do you have?"

Not only were the tentacles regenerating, but they were also moving eastward. The movement was strange. From the sky, the tentacles formed a black tide that flew towards the restraint runes. While moving, tentacles in the tide constantly shot towards the runes.

After shooting out, the tentacles would weaken from the rune array. They would slow down and turn limp. However, it also used up much of the rune array's energy.

Snick, snick, snick. There were countless sounds, like tens of thousands of arrows shooting out.

The fire in the air thinned. However, the Red Dragon Queen's attack had a great benefit. It cleared almost half of the tentacles, greatly reducing Link's obstacles.

The flames quickly lowered to a safe level. Link took a deep breath; the Dragon Power rumbled inside him. Instantly, he felt that his body was like a gunpowder barrel that was already ignited.

He used all his power!

Flapping his wings, there was a boom, and a ripple visible to the naked eye appeared. It was the powerful air current created by his wings! With the powerful push, Link's speed skyrocketed to the max. The world blurred in his vision. Wind sliced at his body but was stopped by the sturdy dragon scales.

At this moment, he was light; he was electricity; he was a black sword of holy judgment!

Link had a clear target—the 100-foot-wide lump of tentacles wriggling like worms at the heart. He planned to destroy it, enter the Sea of Void, and kill the head hiding there.

While charging, Link saw a body appear in the tentacle ball. The upper half was Lucia Silverstar; the lower half was connected to the tentacles. They had become one.

A crisp woman's voice came from Silverstar's body. "Hehe, are you on a suicide mission?"

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Countless tentacles instantly shot into the sky, some grappling at Link. Others blocked

Link's path, entangling into each other and forming a net.

"You're a little bird, and I'm the bird-catcher, hehe!"

Link was huge at almost 230 feet long. However, the tentacle net was even bigger. It was more than 300 feet wide and had many levels. With so many interlocking levels of tentacles, he couldn't break through with brute force.

If Link was caught, he would definitely become the little bird that the Void Tyrant spoke of.

"Link, don't be brash!" Gretel yelled, seeing that Link was about to force it. She couldn't stop him though. She'd just cast the Void Destructor and hadn't recovered yet.

Link didn't seem to hear. Just as he was about to crash, he thought, Dragon King's Fury!

He activated the effect. His power doubled, and his speed rose by 50%. Instantly, it felt like he would explode. Destructive force tore violently through his body. He could even hear his blood whistling.

Whoosh, whoosh. It was like a tidal wave!

Boom! Under this extreme speed, another wave rippled in the air behind him. At first, he was flying at more than 3000 feet per second. Now, he was 50% faster.

This wasn't all! He expanded all his dragon scales and retracted his wings. His body started spinning like a rotating cluster of blades!

Then he crashed into the tentacle net.

Snick, snick, snick, snick. It was the sound of blades cutting vines. Link easily tore through the black web of tentacles layer after layer. There were three layers, but he sliced through all three.

Link broke free from the web and reached the heart!

"I'm not a bird, and you're not the bird-catcher. Right now, you're my prey!"

His power was at the max, and his voice was a deafening roar. It rumbled through the entire battlefield.

Roar. Blazing dragon breath created a path, burning a hole in the black ball. Silverstar's body evaporated directly. Without waiting for the Void Tyrant to react, Link ducked into the hole. At the same time, he activated the ultimate secret of the dragon body.

Void Ferry, realm teleportation!

Watery light appeared on Link. His body quickly turned transparent and soon disappeared from Firuman.

At the same time, a huge body rushed into the Sea of Void.

The Sea of Void was endless and boundless. It was filled with terrible vortexes and wild currents everywhere. This was the forbidden land for all mortal lives.

Link had once gone through the Sea of Void. He'd almost died that time and suffered from the side effects for a long while. This time, he didn't feel any pressure, thanks to the dragon body.

His body was the Void Ferry. It helped him fend off all dangers here.

Link saw the Void Tyrant's head. It was right next to him! It was like an octopus's head with countless tentacles under it. The tentacles were deep into the glowing World of Firuman.

Suddenly seeing Link in the Sea of Void, the Void Tyrant was shocked too. His bloody eyes stared at Link. Thought waves traveled over, saying, How did you get here? How can you move in the Sea of Void?

He wanted to defend himself, but he didn't have many tentacles in the Sea of Void. Most of his power was in Firuman, and he couldn't move them over fast enough. More terrifying was that Link wasn't far from him. He didn't have time to escape, and he couldn't hide!

Link flapped his wings. He discovered that the Sea of Void was really like a sea to the dragon body. When he flapped his wings, he could still use the power to push forward.

This didn't mean the Sea of Void was actual water. The dragon body was designed to be able to use its power.

Dragon King's Fury! Link activated it again.

Boom! His wings pushed a bunch of Void power behind, and he shot towards the Void Tyrant.

Roar! Dragon breath cut the path for him. It wasn't fire now; instead, it was a frosty white flood of Void.

The dragon breath hit the Void Tyrant's face, and it yelled uncontrollably.

Link took the chance to pounce. He didn't care about tactics and used his claws, thorns, and teeth, wildly attacking the Void Tyrant's head.

He couldn't use magic in the Sea of Void. He could only use the mysterious Sea of Void to attack. The Void Tyrant struggled violently too. The tentacles slapped against Link, cutting apart scales and breaking thorns, but Link didn't care. He wanted to kill this thing.

After who knew how long, Link ripped off the Void Tyrant's head. He was covered in wounds too. The worst injury was where a tentacle had dug into his back, straight to his inner organs.

His vision flashed; he'd completed the mission.

Epic Mission Series Complete: Exterminate

Player received 50 Jogu.

Player received Assassin's Dragon King Belt (Legendary)

Seeing this, Link's tense nerves relaxed. He finally killed this damn thing.

Chapter 454

The Secret Duke

Dragon Valley

Not long after Link plunged into the Sea of Void, Gretel watched as the black tentacles in the city began moving even more erratically.

At first, the tentacles had been whipping against the binding rune circle in an orderly fashion, like a black tidal wave. Now, it seemed that they were beginning to retreat from the circle in a state of complete disorder.

It was like watching a pack of dogs running away in defeat with their tails tucked between their legs.

This lasted for more than a minute, and then, all of a sudden, the tentacles slackened and fell to the ground limply, as if they had lost all the life in them.

This went on for another ten seconds, and by that time, Gretel was sure that the Void Tyrant was dead.

Outside the city

Lucia Silverstar noticed this as well. Upon seeing the state of the tentacles, she immediately shouted ecstatically, "The Void Tyrant is dead! It's finally been killed!"

"Really?" The Red Dragon Elders all looked at her in disbelief. Their enemy was immense, its tentacles covering both ground and sky. Even a Legendary Flame spell from the Red Dragon Queen couldn't burn it down. How on earth could it have been killed?

"It's true! Link went into the Sea of Void, he must have destroyed the Void Tyrant's brain!" Lucia Silverstar excitedly replied. She was, after all, a Legendary Magician, and she knew exactly what Link had planned on doing there.

One of the Red Dragon Elders asked, "What about Master Link, has he not returned?"

"Well..." Silverstar could not think of an answer. The Void Tyrant was dead, but Link had not yet returned to the material realm. Surely he must have been all right?

Worried about Link, Gretel immediately leapt into action.

She flew to where Link had disappeared, then entered the Void by activating Spatial Transference.

Once within the Sea of Void, all she could see was a blur of gray. There were energy whirlpools everywhere, and from time to time, flashes of light erupted close by.

A sudden energy turbulence flowed past her in one direction.

The reason was simple: dimensions were not stationary objects in the Sea of Void. On the contrary, they were like bubbles floating on the surface of an ocean, rotating as dictated by the physical laws of their surroundings.

But no one actually knew what those laws were.

"Link, where are you? Link!" Gretel could not find Link at all; for now, the most she could do was send her thought waves out into the Void.

She continued shouting for Link, but no response came from him, wherever he was.

Time went by, and Gretel began to despair, fearing that Link had been killed during his battle with the Void Tyrant, his corpse now being carried away by the eddies in the Void.

But she still needed to thank him for what he had done!

"Link! Link!" Gretel did not want to believe that he was already dead. She continued to fly about aimlessly, searching for any hint of life.

She could not stop thinking about Link.

They had first met each other in the Dragon Square, where he and that Yabba dwarf had destroyed the Worthdamk in secret.

When they had been discussing their theses on spatial magic, he had said to her with a smug smile, "You've made a mistake here, Your Highness."

When they had been walking in the woods in the Korora Mountain Range, he had cleared the path of the brambles and vines for her with much decorum and had even built a stone bridge across a stream for her. On the Ancestor Altar, their sudden change in behavior towards him had not fazed him, and even in her time of need, Link had been the first to step up to her aid.

Now, he had saved Dragon Valley, but at the cost of his life.

She should not have neglected Lucia Silverstar, she should not have associated the Black Dragon King with Link. That was ancient history. Link had nothing to do with it!

She was the one who had sent Link to his death!

"Link! Link!" Gretel's voice had now turned into a sob.

Just when she was on the brink of giving up hope, a weak mental presence reached out to her. "Stop crying, I'm not dead yet! I'm right here!"

Gretel was overjoyed. She immediately flew where the consciousness guided her. Soon, she found Link lying motionless at the outer reaches of the dimensional barrier. Black tentacles wrapped around him, one of them deeply embedded in his back.

"My dragon body was severely injured. I couldn't use Spatial Transference with it," said Link. He had almost been carried away by a strong eddy to the deeper regions of the Void. It was fortunate that he had still had some strength left in him, so he had been able to hang on to the dimensional barrier just in time.

"You're safe now, I'm here." Gretel flew to his side, and embraced Link's body in her arms as she activated Spatial Transference.

A watery film of light began enveloping them, and the two slowly floated and once again resurfaced back into the realm of Firuman.

The light blinded Link's eyes as he returned to the realm of Firuman, up in the air above Dragon Valley, not too far from where he had first entered the Sea of Void.

Looking down, he could see the lifeless mass of black tentacles and the crowd of dragon warriors outside the city.

Gretel slowly hovered to the ground and let him down gently when she landed.

The dragon warriors surrounded them immediately, looking at Link with a mix of respect, dread, and confusion.

"All right, give us some space. Master Link is heavily injured and needs immediate attention," shouted the Red Dragon Queen.

Everyone scattered in an instant, as ordered.

Link had received severe damage on his back. The tentacles had pierced through the abdomen of his dragon body. Unbearable pain seized his body at even the slightest movement.

Gretel grabbed onto the tentacle and infused her Dragon Power into Link's body. She then whispered to him, "All right, this will all be over before you know it, just relax."

She proceeded to pull the black tentacle fiercely out of his back.

"Owww," Link roared in pain, and his surroundings went black.

Gretel began sealing up the internal wounds in Link's body with her Dragon Power, then gently touched his dragon's heart. A few seconds later, Link's body began pulling back its dragon form, and he finally returned to his human form.

While there were no traces of blood on his human body, she noticed a bloody wound on his back when taking off his clothes. Though it had stopped bleeding, it definitely stood out like a sore thumb.

Gently picking up Link's body with her dragon claw, Gretel took off into the sky again and hurled down a Void Destructor Fireball at the black tentacles on the ground.

'Boom!' The fire engulfed the ruins below, the lifeless black tentacles disintegrating into ash.

She then ordered her subjects, "Clear the place thoroughly, I want every tentacle burned!"

"Yes, Your Highness!" said the Red Dragon Elders in unison.

Gretel began flying towards Dragon Temple for further treatment of Link's injuries.

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Link's heart was racing hard as he lay on his bed, unconscious.

The blurry visions he had seen in his state of unconsciousness had been of the land of Felde.

He had seen the place bathed in a sea of fire, children in tears as they knelt beside the corpses of their parents. There were countless corpses of the Yabba people, practically covering the whole island. He had even seen the port engulfed in flames and bodies floating on the sea, its waters running red with their blood.

In the ruins, he had seen black, shadowy figures flitting about. Their pointed ears had resembled those of elves, but they had also had blood-red eyes, and Link had not been able to tell what they were.

It was then that a black shadow had swooped down at him. He had heard a sharp laughter overhead and seen that the black figure was baring its sharp teeth at him. From its mouth, strands of glistening saliva had dripped down to the ground, and he had seen bits of fresh, bloody meat hanging off its teeth.

Link immediately woke up from his sleep when the thing swooped down at him.

Upon waking up, he found himself lying on a large bed eight feet off the ground and staring at a ceiling. Only the interior of the Dragon Temple possessed such a unique architectural style.

He wiped the cold sweat off of his forehead and carefully felt the rest of his body. He felt weak, but there was no pain. There was a tightness around his chest, and he noticed that it was wrapped in bandages.

"You're awake?" a familiar voice called out. It was Gretel.

"How long have I been sleeping?" Link struggled to sit up. His mind kept going back to the nightmare he had seen just before. The details of it were vague, and it didn't feel quite like a premonition, but still, he couldn't help but worry about it.

"Not long. Three days." Gretel rushed to the bed and helped Link to lean on the headboard of the bed.

A sudden pain shot through Link's body, reminding him that he had not yet healed fully. "How's Dragon Valley?"

"The Void Tyrant is dead. The new bodies that had split off from the original were destroyed before they even had a chance to mature. Thanks to you, order has been restored to Dragon Valley." Gretel sat on the bed and squeezed Link's hand in gratitude.

"Oh, that's great then." Link nodded, indifferently pulling his hand out of Gretel's.

"When will my wounds be fully healed?" asked Link again.

"Your injuries will need at least half a month to recover fully. However, your dragon body took some serious damage, and while it is capable of self-repair, it may take half a year before you can transform into it again. Don't worry too much about it. Take as long as you need to rest here in Dragon Valley. I've already sent word to Felde. Oh, and I've also sent thirty dragon warriors there. Pettalong will be flying there as well in a few days, which should be enough to dissuade any attempts at an invasion."

The Red Dragon Queen knelt down beside Link's bed and raised her eyes to look at Link. "I heard you speaking in your sleep. Don't worry, nothing will happen to Felde."

Thirty Red Dragon warriors and a Level-9 Elder would be strong enough to deal with any non-Legendary being. Link let out a soft sigh and nodded at the queen. "Thank you, Your Highness."

"You just get some rest. If you need anything, call for me, I won't be far."

"Okay."

Gretel gave a few orders to the attendants nearby and was about to leave, but after taking a few steps towards the door, she turned back to Link and stuffed a black seal into Link's hand. "You are now officially a duke of the Dragon race."

Without waiting for a reply from Link, she hurriedly exited the room.

Link scratched his head in confusion. This was certainly a peculiar way of conferring the title of duke to someone. She hadn't even given him the chance to refuse her.

Chapter 455

Use It Now, But Don't Wear It

The black seal was a magic ring. Link studied it carefully, and information appeared in his vision.

Dragon Duke's Obsidian Seal (Rechargeable)

Legendary

Effect 1: Instantaneously creates a Level-12 shield after activating (3/3)

Effect 2: Teleportation from five to 50 miles (3/3)

Effect 3: Summon the Red Dragon Queen!

(Note: According to dragon tradition, dragons who possess the black seal will automatically become the only candidate for the Red Dragon Queen's companion.)

This seal was useful. It was a shield that could transport him—it was practically lifesaving. The note made Link speechless though. Didn't "only candidate" basically mean future husband?

The Red Dragon Queen did something like this without telling him again.

No, I can't take this. It'll cause problems. How will I explain to Celine later?

Link troubled over this for a long while. Finally, he used the Magician's Hand to place the seal on the table beside him. With the soft clack, he stopped thinking about it.

Materialize rewards, he told the game system.

Ding! His vision flashed, and a money pouch-like thing appeared in his hands. He opened it to see 50 Jogu that looked like white Go pieces.

He got 50 from this mission. With the 25 from the last mission, he now had 75 Jogu.

Aisenis had said that if Link gave him 300 Jogu, he would provide the way to mend the crack.

It wasn't far away now.

However, he wouldn't get Epic missions every day. Link decided that after his body recovered, he would go to relics to find Jogu. Right, he could also give rewards for people to help him look.

Other than Jogu, there was also a heavy dark blue belt. Looking at it, the messages appeared.

Assassin's Dragon King Belt

Lower-Order Legendary (11)

Effect: Activates the Infinite Dragon Power effect. The user's Dragon Power recovery rate increases by 1000% for 20 seconds. This effect can be used once per month.

(Note: With this, you no longer have to worry about using up Dragon Power.)

"Great." Link put away the belt.

He didn't have anything else to do, so he took out the book Dragon to read. He'd been studying the contents for half a month but still only knew the basics. If he wanted to study it all, it would take one or two years.

Link had an idea. Dragons and humans are from the same source. If I can find the secret to Dragon Power and transform it into a battle art, there will be many more powerful humans. At that time, they won't be bullied by others anymore.

With this goal in mind, Link grew even more serious.

Time flew by and half a day passed. There was a sudden sound by the door. Link looked over to see Gretel walk in with some food.

She took a few steps and saw the black seal Link put on the table. Her steps faltered, but she didn't stop. Gretel continued forward and placed the food on the table. Picking up the seal, she asked casually, "How come you put it here?"

Link was still focused on the book. Hearing the question, he looked up. Seeing Gretel holding the seal, he instantly felt awkward. After a pregnant pause, he shrugged. "I saw a book in the library, called Traditional Power. It introduced the seal. I don't think I'm suitable for a duke."

He actually hadn't read that book, but he'd seen the title at the library, so he just stole it.

"A mortal's life is short. I can wait for 100 years later." Since Link knew, Gretel didn't have to hide it anymore. She handed the seal to him.

Link felt awkward. This was his first time in a situation like this, but the Red Dragon Queen had lived for 2000 years. She could calmly face these things but Link couldn't.

He didn't know what to do. If he rejected her, he would feel heartless. If he accepted, he would be heartless to Celine. He was caught.

Seeing him like this, Gretel burst into laughter. She suddenly realized that this powerful Legendary Magician was only a 20-year-old young man and she had been so scared of getting rejected.

This gave her a psychological advantage. She tossed the seal into Link's lap, saying, "Take it, kid. Only the elders know this tradition. Even the younger dragons don't know. Just take it. You don't have to wear it; just protect yourself. When you think it through, wear it on your left middle finger, and I'll sense it."

This was well-said and immediately soothed Link's troubles. He was realistic. Hearing the queen's words, he quickly put the seal away. "Then I'll take it."

Grinning, Gretel brought over a bowl of soup and set the spoon down. "I was ready to feed you. So many people want me to feed them, but I know you won't accept it. Here, do it yourself. This soup is made from the purple moon cassava grown in the Moonlight Forest in the south of the Dragon Valley. It's miraculous for healing. Drink it while it's still hot."

"Oh, okay." Link sniffed, and a rich aroma hit his nose. His appetite was awakened. He took a sip; the aromatic softness tasted great. He quickly slurped the soup down.

Gretel sat beside the bed. Seeing how happy Link was while eating, she couldn't help but smile. As expected, under the Legendary Magician, he was just a kid who hadn't

experienced much.

This bratty kid.

When Link was done, Gretel asked, "How was it?"

Link felt a warm current flow through his stomach. He rubbed his stomach gently. It had hurt before, but with this warmth, the pain was gone.

He nodded continuously. "It's delicious."

"There will be more but the cassava it's only for me. I gave it to you now, so I don't have any left. You have to pay me back."

"Uh... how?"

"You're an Enchantment Magician. Those guys took the Emerald Circle. And those stabilizing runes..."

Link chuckled. "Oh, that? That's easy. How about tomorrow? I can start tomorrow."

Gretel quickly shook her head. "No need to hurry. You can rest a few more days, and I'll finish the easier parts. I'll leave the difficult things to you."

"No problem."

"Oh, there's also this." Gretel took out a magic book for Link. "Lucia Silverstar told me to give this to you. It's her notes."

Hearing this, Link ignored his injuries and sat up, reaching for the book. This was a Legendary figure's gains. It was more valuable than a whole country!

The words Secret Power was written in delicate font. Lucia Silverstar seemed to specialize in Secret spells. It happened to be just what Link lacked.

He flipped through and scanned roughly. Link's eyes brightened. He hadn't heard of many of the knowledge introduced in the book. These notes will definitely widen his view of the Secret spells. He'd been at a disadvantage because of this before.

Putting the book away carefully, Link asked, "How is Silverstar now?"

"She went to the Neanderthals' ancestral place to rest. I sent a Warrior to escort her. We won't see her anymore." Gretel was a bit sad. Silverstar was her old friend, but only her soul was left now. This was the same as dying.

Link felt it was unfortunate too. With Silverstar, Firuman was one Legendary figure fewer. It was a pity.

"Alright, rest well. You'll be busy in a few days."

Link spent the days recovering in the Dragon Temple. Three days later, his wounds were mostly healed, so he started working on the stabilizing runes.

These runes were very complicated. Non-Legendary figures couldn't do them. Even with Link and Gretel working together, one runestone required three days, but they needed at least ten. This meant it would take one month to complete.

Link just took it as Enchantment practice.

While creating these runestones, he also discussed some magic questions with Gretel. He was especially interested in the healing properties of Dragon Power.

Naturally, Gretel didn't hold anything back in answering.

One month later, the runes were complete, and Link had learned a few healing spells. They weren't very effective on his body, but that was because his body was too strong. The spells would be like divine spells on regular people.

After completing the runes, they went to Korora Mountain Range to set them. It was also a success. After setting the runes, the cracked region was completely sealed inside a dome. It was practically isolated from the Firuman Realm.

However, this only solved the surface instead of the core. Mana would continue accumulating in that region. Once the density surpassed the limit of the runes, there would be a pop and Mana would flood out. The Mana density of the entire Firuman Realm would instantly multiply many times.

Mana's sudden explosion wouldn't cause much damage, but it wasn't good either. To counter this, Link and Gretel also worked to set up alarm equipment around the runes. Once the Mana was about to reach the limit, the alarm would go off automatically.

Looking at the isolated area in the mountain, Link predicted, "It should last ten years. During this time, I'll look for a way to mend the crack."

"I can tell that you already have an idea, right?" Gretel asked, chuckling. After spending so much time together, she knew Link better. For example, his brows were relaxed while talking now. Even though he didn't say anything definite, Gretel knew that he already had a plan in mind.

Link smiled. "I can't fool you. I know a very powerful Travel Magician. He said that he has a plan, but he needs some things in exchange."

With that, Link took out a Jogu to give Gretel. "He needs 300 of this. Have you seen this before?"

Gretel studied the Jogu and shook her head. "It only looks like a pretty stone to me. Where did you find it?"

"In relics. Some ancient people used it as decorations."

Hearing this, the Red Dragon Queen chuckled wryly. "You want to rob tombs?"

Link shrugged. "Compared to the safety of the realm, that's nothing."

"You're right. Give me one as a sample. I'll send my Warriors to look all over the continent. Once it's enough, I'll send it to you."

"No problem."

Seeing that it was getting late, Link said, "My injuries are all healed. I won't spend more time in the Dragon Valley. Felina, I'll have to bother you again."

"It's nothing, Duke," Felina said, chuckling. She transformed into dragon form, and Link climbed onto her.

"Come visit when you're free." Gretel waved at Link.

"I will." Link waved as well.

Felina began flying. This time, she wouldn't get tired. When she did, Link would pump Flawless Dragon Power into her, and she would instantly become revitalized.

She brought Link eastward and landed in Ferde within half a day. Felina didn't go back to the Dragon Valley. She stayed in Ferde as the guard of Duke Link.

Yes, Link was now a duke of the Dragon Valley. This wasn't just an honorary title. He had true authority and was also recognized by the entire dragon race.

Of course, he wouldn't use this authority unless he had no other choice.

Link walked towards his Mage Tower. At the entrance, he saw a familiar man. It was Skinorse of MI3. He was disguised as a regular wandering vigilante.

"How come you have time to see me?" Link asked, smiling.

Skinorse's expression was off. He looked side to side and muttered, "Lord, I've been waiting for a long time. I need to talk to you in private!"

Chapter 456

There's Something Wrong with the Iron Duke

Skinorse had dressed himself up so extravagantly that anyone else would have a hard time recognizing him. Link figured that he had something important to talk about.

Link calmly flicked a finger at Skinorse, sending a speck of light flying towards him.

Traceless Invisibility.

Skinorse instantly vanished on the spot.

Link gestured at him to enter into the magic tower with him. He could sense the light stirring of air as Skinorse followed him from behind.

The number of students on the first floor of the Mage Tower had increased to around eighty. As soon as he stepped through the door, the students noticed him immediately, and everyone stood at attention before him in a flurry.

Before, Link had not been used to such courteous treatment; now, he did not mind it as much. He greeted the young students with a wave of his hand before striding off towards the higher levels of the Mage Tower.

When they finally reached the attic at the top of the tower, Link snapped his fingers, removing the invisibility spell from Skinorse's body.

The attic was cluttered with all kinds of everyday objects. Leaning on something wrapped in fur, Link waited until Skinorse had entered the room, then proceeded to cast a soundproof spell on the door.

"All right, you can talk."

Skinorse handed a Memory Crystal to Link. "Lord Link, you'd better take a look at this."

Link took the crystal from him. Upon activating it, an indistinct image was projected into the air. From the low angle the image was taken at, it was evident that the user of

the Memory Crystal was exercising great caution while using it in a crowded area.

The backs of a group of soldiers could be seen in the image. Then, a voice spoke out. "This Magician was practising black magic. When he was found out, not only did he refuse to make public the contents of his magic, he even assaulted the investigators, severely injuring two warriors in the process. He must be an agent of the dark forces!"

As soon as he finished speaking, there was a terrible thud. Though the image did not show what had made the sound, Link was familiar enough with it to know that someone had been decapitated.

"That voice, was it Duke Abel?"

"Yes, it was him."

In the image, when the deed was done, the surrounding soldiers began to scatter from the place. The Magician who had been hiding in the crowd gave the execution grounds one last sweep with the Memory Crystal before putting it away.

At this point, Link paused the image.

On the execution ground lay four headless corpses, which meant that three other people had been executed before the Magician. Duke Abel and a few other generals sat on a high bench in the distance, stern expressions on their faces.

Looking at this, Link deactivated the Memory Crystal and told Skinorse, "The army was handing out executions to those guilty of insubordination. I don't think that's important enough to bring it to me."

The voice from the Memory Crystal had already stated the reasons for the execution clearly: illegal practice of black magic and assault on one's fellow officers. After the Orida Fortress' confrontation with the Dark Army, they had been on high alert for any sign of black magic. What this Magician did was no different from suicide.

Skinorse nodded. "Purely based on what you've seen from the image, it may seem normal. But I feel that the duke himself has been a bit aggressive as of late."

"What do you mean?" Link knew that Skinorse would not have come to him with just a hunch; he must have had concrete evidence with him.

Skinorse gazed out the window. After the confrontation in the north, his handsome face had wizened a great deal, and there were a few more tufts of white hair growing out of his temples. He frowned and said in a gravelly voice, "Not long after you left, the duke began a purge of the army through a special unit that was tasked with carrying out investigations on every warrior, including their backgrounds. As for Magicians, they were required to make public the findings of their research on magic. This doesn't seem like much at first thought, but after a month into the operation, they began taking a more excessive approach, to the point that there was no turning back."

Skinorse turned to look at Link. "I once saw an officer who was hung on the gallows just because he had a demon fang in his possession. There was even a warrior who thought it would be fun to carve a wooden statue of a succubus and was then beheaded for it. The Magician that was executed in the image, the 'black magic' that he was practicing was a Level-4 Eye of the Soul spell, a practically harmless detection spell, and the reason he assaulted those warriors was because they had torn up his research in front of him. It's as if the duke has already gone off the deep end. He's basically mad at this point."

Link furrowed his brows at this. This did indeed seem a bit excessive. He asked, "Has anyone approached him about this?"

"The dean of the East Cove Magic Academy went over to exchange words with him, but they still parted with ill will. The duke remained quiet for a few days, but resumed his inquisition not long after."

"Does King Leon know about this?" asked Link.

"Yes, he does. The king has written a few letters to him, but you know, after the destruction of Hot Spring City, the king's authority has been at an all-time low. The duke didn't seem too concerned about him," Skinorse replied.

Finally, Link asked, "Barring all those things, how is Duke Abel faring in the affairs of defense lately?"

"Though far more aggressive than before, he has also been very productive in that regard. More than thirty demons are being exterminated every day in the Black Forest. At first, we were even killing more than 100 Dark Elves almost every day; now, we can't even find a single Dark Elf within the area 200 miles north of Orida Fortress. There was also one time Kanorse slayed a Level-8 demon. He was then greatly

rewarded by the duke and made leader of the first legion."

All this was truth. Skinorse reported all that he had witnessed to Link without any omission.

"I see." Link fell silent.

To normal people like Skinorse, what Duke Abel had done may have seemed cruel and excessive, but in Link's eyes, the duke had simply been fulfilling his duties, no more, no less.

Duke Abel's primary task had been to defend the fortress from the demons and Dark Elves of the Black Forest. He should not have been reprimanded for doing so well.

More importantly, Link was only a lord of Ferde. These matters had nothing to do with him.

It was also pointless for him to write a letter to the duke or meet him personally at this point, since King Leon and Master Magician Anthony had already done both those things, but to no avail. Any further action from him would probably elicit anger from the duke, maybe even backfiring on Link himself.

However, this was something he could not ignore. Duke Abel may have been traumatised by the great war, and given the current circumstances, he may not have been of sound mind, which was not a good thing.

After thinking about it for a while, Link decided that the wisest course of action for now was to simply wait and see.

He took out a piece of Thorium and a Black Kun rock and began casting an enchantment on both of them. Around ten minutes later, he was able to forge a rune stone out of both materials, then infused his Dragon Power into it. Link handed the rune stone to Skinorse. "This is something I don't think I'm able to intervene in freely. Take the rune stone back north and continue your observations. Report back to me if there are any new advancements. If you find yourself in danger, activate this rune stone to cast a one-time 2,000-feet teleportation spell."

Skinorse accepted the runestone and opened his mouth as if to say something before closing it again.

"Is there something on your mind?"

Skinorse let out a sigh. "As a matter of fact, I do not plan on going back this time. Now that the Divine Gear is gone, and the Dark Elves have been defeated, I do not feel like staying in the army any longer. Things have become too oppressive. I'm only here to bring you this message, then I'll be off to do my own adventuring across the continent."

Link was rendered speechless. "So you're a deserter?"

This fellow sure was cunning, to have the nerve to leave out such an important piece of information and abscond after receiving a rune stone from him!

Skinorse became apprehensive. "You won't force me back to the fortress, will you?"

Decapitation was the fate that awaited all deserters.

Link shook his head. "I won't. Since you won't be going back, I'll just have to send for someone else to continue observing things in the north... You said something about going off on an adventure?"

"Yes, it's what I've always dreamed of." As soon as he said those words, Skinorse's face lit up in excitement.

A bit startled by this, Link asked, "Oh, I remember the first time you came to me, you were saying something about looking for the tomb of some late dwarf king. What happened to your other companions?"

"They didn't fare too well. The priestess is still alive, though the others fell in battle. Truth be told, she's coming with me down south. How about it, do you still want to come along with us?"

Link was now a Legendary master. Why would he lower himself to robbing graves with him?

Link shook his head, smiling. "No, I can't. I'm still busy with the affairs of Ferde. But if you're going, I do have a few things I would like you to find for me. You'll be handsomely compensated for your troubles."

Skinorse's eyes lit up. "I don't want money, I deal only in magical equipment! I'll steal even the Red Dragon Queen's underwear for you if you're able to give me some magical

gear in exchange!"

"..." Link's face went blank at this, finding it difficult to believe what he was hearing. What would he need the queen's underwear for anyway? The man had changed into an entirely different person upon announcing he was deserting the army.

Link took out a piece of Jogu and gave it to him. "I want a stone like this one. Find as much as you can in your travels. Also, you may come across some members of the dragon race who are searching for the same kind of stone in your path. Just show this to them, and they'll let you have the stone."

Link then gave Skinorse a piece of silver-black dragon scale, which would serve as proof of his identity among the dragon race.

"I understand." Skinorse toyed with the scale a little, curious about its composition.

"As for your reward, if you're able to give me a hundred Jogus, I'll forge you a piece of Legendary equipment of your own choosing."

Skinorse was already nodding furiously before Link had even finished. "What about a Legendary dagger? Whatever, I'll do it. Er, what about my priestess friend?"

"She will be rewarded as well. You just bring her here, and she'll receive a piece of magical equipment from me, too."

"That won't be a problem. I'll hold onto this scale and bring back 101 Jogus for you before you know it."

"Bring as much as you can. Remember, 100 Jogus for one piece of magical gear."

Skinorse heaved a long sigh. "Oh, you really know how to work someone to the bone."

When all was said and done, Skinorse realized that he had not a single gold coin on him, what with being a thief who didn't steal for gold. He then put aside all sense of shame and asked for a bag of gold coins before leaving the room with an air of satisfaction.

Link returned to his quarters and rested for a bit. It wasn't long before Lucy barged into the room.

"My lord, our anti-magic soil mines have been dug empty, and the city hall is almost out of money."

Lucy spread an account book out in front of Link, who saw that everything was in red. They had been running a deficit for a long while.

Chapter 457

Cannot Give Up This Island!

Lucy's records were very clear. Every expense and income was easily seen. Link quickly flipped through and had a detailed understanding of the territory's financial situation.

Because of the clay mine, Ferde's town hall had a high income but also spent money quickly. They developed the city quickly and also had a skirmish with the southern Kingdom of Delonga.

Another big expense was for the Orida Fortress. During the final battle, various types of material were sent south, and Ferde had been responsible for 60% of it.

It wasn't a stream of money going out; it was more like a flood.

Under these circumstances, Ferde developed the clay mines wildly to export to every corner of Firuman.

From the records, Link could see that the biggest buyers were the Beastmen of the Golden Plains. They steered shabby merchant ships and traveled more than half of the world's coastlines. They really traveled thousands of miles for the trade.

Thus, within one and a half years, the clay mines were practically empty.

"Lord," Lucy said seriously. "With the current speed, we can only mine for two more months. If we don't have a new source of income after that, we will have to reduce developments. Otherwise, we will go bankrupt."

"Oh, this is truly a problem." Link placed the records down and looked out the window. This was the top floor of the Mage Tower. With his great vision, he could see all the way to the ocean from here.

"Last time I left, I talked about the Magnetic Magic Island. Did you send ships to investigate it?"

Lucy nodded and took out another scroll. "This is the second thing I wanted to talk about. We found the island, but the situation isn't great. When we went, we saw the yew ships of the High Elves. They were mining on the island..."

Link was shocked at this and cursed inwardly. These High Elves were troublesome. He couldn't help but slap his forehead. "Oh, this is my fault. I should've told you earlier... What is this scroll?"

"It's the precise marine chart of the continent that our sailors drew. Please take a look."

Link opened the scroll. It indeed was a marine chart. The shape of the coastline looked familiar. Thinking a bit, he realized it was exactly like the map in the game. It was very precise and lived up to the name.

The map noted all the explored islands near Ferde, as well as trade winds, currents, and more. This was extremely valuable for the captains.

Link also saw the Isle of Dawn, Ferde Territory, and the Magnetic Magic Island. He estimated that the Magnetic Magic Island was around 310 miles from Ferde and 300 miles from the Isle of Dawn. It was practically in the middle but just a bit closer to the Isle of Dawn.

This was annoying. If they really got into the specifics, this island belonged to the High Elves. But the mines there were so valuable. How could he just give up?

Link placed the map on the table and tapped it rhythmically. Lucy subconsciously held her breath, waiting for Link's decision with her hands folded over chest. She was the general manager of Scorched City, but before Link, she still felt like the female mercenary. Her young master was getting more and more powerful.

After around two minutes, Link had decided. "This island," he uttered, "is ours."

Lucy's expression froze. "Are we going to war?"

Ferde had been developing their navy for more than one year and was quite powerful. It now had seven three-masted magic warships. With the Yabbas' arrival, many magic cannons and muskets were added to the ships, strengthening them.

Now, the Ferde Navy was a force to be reckoned with in the seas. However, they didn't have much status. They hadn't experienced battle yet, let alone shed any blood. The

other territory lords nearby called them boy scouts. They weren't too intimidating for pirates either.

If they could fight even a small skirmish with the High Elves and their powerful navy, the Ferde Navy's reputation would rise as long as they didn't lose terribly.

Link shook his head. "No, no, we can't declare war so easily."

"Then how do we get it? The High Elves have started mining already," Lucy said. The metals were valuable, and they weren't stupid. How could they hand it over without putting up a fight?

Link shook his head with a smile. Rising, he walked to the window and looked at the dark clouds in the sky. "Another year has passed," he lamented. "It's early summer again."

Lucy was confused and reflexively replied, "Yeah, time passes quickly."

"Looking at the weather, I think a hurricane will come soon. Send my order to the general and tell him to prepare a fleet to go towards the island at any time."

Lucy was still confused. "But Master Grenci said earlier that there wouldn't be any hurricanes at this time."

Master Grenci was quite well-versed in the changes of weather and had practically become the weatherman of Ferde. He would send alerts of any bad weather. This helped to prevent losses for the territory. Now, many captains would ask Master Grenci for weather predictions before going out to sea.

Link chuckled. "No, no. Master Grenci is wrong this time."

Lucy couldn't refute him. Link was a Legendary Magician while Grenci was at Level-7. There was such a big difference between them. If he said Grenci was wrong, then Grenci was wrong.

"Then I'll go send the warning."

"Okay, go. Remember to tell the navy to get ready. Once the hurricane passes, we'll go to the island."

Hearing this, a lightbulb went off in Lucy's mind. She seemed to grasp something, but she couldn't figure out the details. After a blank moment, it clicked. Eyes flashing, she asked, "Do you mean—"

Link waved his hand. "Good that you understand but don't say anything. Remember, we don't know anything. We just have good luck. Of course, we move fast too!"

"Understood!" Lucy walked away, deeply impressed.

After Lucy left, Link went back to the table and continued looking at the map. After a moment, he hit his forehead, sighing. Natural resources will always be used up. If we want to keep up the development, Ferde must have its own specialty.

Leaning back in the lounge chair, he used the Magician's Hand to rock it. Link looked out at the window at the activity and fell into deep thought.

After a long time, he suddenly stood up and took out a blank scroll. He wrote, "enchantment" on the cover with runes and "Link Morani" in small font on the bottom right corner.

He had decided to develop enchantment workshops in Ferde and steal the High Elves' business!

After writing, Link opened the scroll. He was calm now. His enchantment skills were known throughout the continent for being detailed and perfect. Even the enchanters in the Isle of Dawn couldn't compare.

In magic theory, Link had dealt with Talisman Enchanting, modern High Elf enchanting, dragon enchanting, and more. He had a wide range, and these theories had been fermenting in his mind. After becoming a Legendary Magician, the enchantment systems matured too.

Brainstorming for a bit, Link began writing.

He didn't write a foreword because this was his first book. He wanted his first advisor Herrera to write it to show his respect.

Right now, the enchantment was already mature in his mind. Moving his pen, his thoughts streamed out like water.

The framework was completed within an hour. Link went back to revise it. After two revisions, it was complete with 36873 words. Every word was needed—it couldn't be a word more or less.

After that, Link started writing the second book. This was titled Beginner Enchantment Magic. This book was easy as well, but the content was more cumbersome. Link calmed himself down and wrote it down bit by bit. He tried to make it clear-cut so people could understand easily.

Time flew by. When Link finished the first draft, it was already night. His ears twitched, and he heard familiar footsteps.

There are three people: Celine, Jacker, and Lucy. Yes, they're ready.

From the sounds, Link knew that the three were at the door. Using his thoughts, he opened the door.

Celine had her big fire gun. She walked in with a blooming smile. Seeing Link, she sped up and kissed him on the lips before Lucy and Jacker. The two felt so awkward.

After a while, Celine finally let go and complained, "You didn't even tell me when you came back. I missed you so much."

"Aw, I only left for about a month." Link patted Celine's back and chuckled. "Sit down. Lucy, Jacker, you two sit too."

When everyone took their seats, Jacker said, "Lord, everything is ready. When should we start?"

After learning that the extremely valuable Magnetic Magic Island had been taken by the High Elves when Link was the one to discover it, Jacker had almost exploded. He'd wanted to fight the High Elves right then and there.

He was a Level-7 Warrior now, and Ferde was rich. He wasn't afraid! However, Link wasn't there, and the High Elves were still powerful. He could only restrain himself.

Now that Link said he was going to take the island, Jacker was so excited. He couldn't stand those arrogant High Elves.

Link put away his incomplete enchantment and smiled. "I think now's a good time.

Let's start now."

From the side, Celine said, "Just saying, I'm taking part too. How can I not be part of this?"

"Okay, okay, you can join too. You won't miss out."

Link made four communication runestones. He gave Jacker and Celine one each and kept one for himself. The last one would be for the navy general that would stay at the harbor.

"Go get ready. Lucy, the High Elves in Ferde might go to you to protest. You must be prepared."

"No problem. I don't know anything," Lucy replied, grinning.

"Okay, then we'll start now. I'll go out first. Wait for my signal."

With that, Link stood up. White light flashed and an instant later, he was at the rooftop. He whistled softly. One minute later, an invisible dragon descended from the sky. It was Felina.

"How may I be at your service, Duke?"

"Take me to the sea." Link jumped onto Felina's back and cast the Invisibility spell for himself so he wouldn't scare people.

Whoosh! Felina spread her wings and flew towards the sea.

Chapter 458

The Shepherd of the Storm

The ocean waters of Ferde

Felina soared through the sky in disorderly spirals with Link on her back. In truth, Felina had no idea where Link wanted her to go. For now, she simply flew in whatever direction Link pointed.

Link held in his hand the Dragon King's Fury, a sharp red light on the tip of the magical sword. His eyes were closed, but in his mind, he was perfectly aware of everything around him.

Everything was depicted clearly in his head in a fantastic blend of colors and shapes, including temperature, wind speed, wind direction, and humidity.

"Fly to your left, yes, just keep going. Do you see that bunch of clouds up front?" asked Link.

Felina did indeed see a huge cluster of clouds coming up ahead of them, its diameter approximately 2,000 feet. Aware that Link had his eyes closed this whole time, she figured that he must be using some sort of vision spell. "I saw it, but the wind's getting stronger here. It's a mini-typhoon. Should we still go on?"

"No, head for the surface of the ocean, where the center of the vortex is. The wind's all right, but it's too small. I'll need to give it a bit more juice."

Felina plunged headfirst towards the sea. When she reached ten feet above sea level, Link suddenly stood up, leapt off of her back and floated in the air a foot above the surface of the sea.

He shouted back at her, "Felina, stay back a bit. That's not far enough, stay at least ten miles away. That's it, just keep flying!"

Once Felina was nothing more than a black speck against the sky in the distance, Link said to the Dragon King's Fury in his hand, "You ready, partner?"

"Don't get mushy on me, we've known each other no longer than a year," growled the sword, but then he casually continued, "Well, blowing up a strong wind should be a piece of cake, so let's go!"

Link began holding his breath for ten seconds, before opening his eyes suddenly.

"Vision of Truth!"

Everything in his eyes turned translucent, especially the big storm cloud before him. Fine strands of light emanated from it; this was the flow of energy around the cloud.

These energy currents were the critical points of the typhoon. Through them, Link could either easily disperse the entire column of cloud, or increase the strength of the typhoon.

Ten seconds later, Link found one of the typhoon's energy points, and pointing the magical sword in his hand at the surface of the sea, spoke in a low voice, "Void Destructor!"

Void Destructor

Level-10 Master Level Flame Spell

Dragon Power Cost: 8900

Description: Concentrate the elemental energies around the user into an incredibly destructive ball of fire.

(Note: This was a gift from the Red Dragon Queen.)

Whoosh! Dazzling beams of light began gathering in the air around the magical sword, and with a continuous hum, a point of red light began growing on its tip. In the span of a second, the point of light expanded into a dark purple fireball with a diameter of more than eight feet.

Once the ball of fire materialized in the air, Link immediately activated the unlimited Dragon Power effect of his Dragon King's belt, which began quickly replenishing his Dragon Power. At the same time, he held in his other hand the Burning Wrath of Heavens, which he pointed at the ocean beneath his feet.

"Distortion Field!"

Through the spell's effect, the waters began rushing upward on both sides.

The scale of Link's Distortion Field was massive, covering an area of approximately 1,000 square feet. From a distance, it looked as if a huge, ancient sword had split the water in two.

At the same time, Link was levitating in the air with the help of the Distortion Field itself, looking like some mystical, sword-wielding deity.

The wall of sea water on both sides reached as high as 500 feet. He then hurled the ball of fire towards the dry patch of ground in the middle. When it reached the ground, Link sharply pulled up his other hand, which was holding the Burning Wrath of Heavens.

At this moment, the sea water, which had parted and risen high on both sides, came crashing down deafeningly.

Fwoosh! The two towering waves collided against one another. Simultaneously, the Void Destructor fireball exploded in the sudden torrent of sea water.

In an instant, the once inky blue sea water turned a dazzling crimson.

The sea water beneath Link's feet began to bulge up like a mountain at the sudden explosion of energy beneath the water's surface. Link's body floated along the undulations of the sea, weightless, like a butterfly fluttering in the middle of a storm.

Moments passed, and the energy of the Void Destructor was finally absorbed by the sea. Link could feel the water beginning to boil and steam rising from its surface.

Felina, who was watching all of this from a distance, saw a trail of white vapor rising towards the sky from the sea.

What was even more peculiar was the fact that the vapor trail seemed to have set something off in the typhoon, as the rotation of the pillar of clouds began picking up speed. The clouds thickened as well, expanding until they filled the sky almost completely.

The wind raged even more violently, and before long, Felina, who was hovering ten

miles away, found it difficult to maintain her balance in the air. Felina had no choice then but to put even more distance between herself and Link.

Far away, she could see Link bobbing along the waves, his body in the midst of the storm radiating a blinding light that illuminated both heaven and sea like a sun.

From time to time, the magic wand and sword that occupied both his hands would let out rays of dark red light; some dissolved into the clouds and some into the sea, while others simply dispersed in the air.

The energy that Link was letting off had the effect of a giant invisible hand stirring up the air, to the point that the clouds were now spreading out at a terrifying rate, with the winds howling wildly like the cries of a thousand ghosts.

At this point, Link was like a god walking among mortal men, holding sway over the elemental forces of the world.

This scene would probably be etched in Felina's memory for as long as she lived.

Whoo!

The pillar of clouds began to move straight for the Broken Isles not far away. At first, it slowly moved across the ocean at a speed of no more than ten feet per second, but as time passed, the cyclone began to accelerate, reaching an astonishing speed of 100 feet per second.

Link followed closely behind the massive cyclone. Like a shepherd, he would pull the world's largest sheep in front of him back on the right track whenever it went off course.

"Felina!" The wind carried Link's voice all the way to her.

Felina immediately flew to his side. Link, who had been levitating in the air all this time with the Distortion Field, returned to his spot on the dragon's back and began focusing on herding the cyclone.

Like a top, the cyclone was now spinning faster and faster as it tore across more than 100 miles of ocean.

The negative pressure caused by the high-speed rotation of the cyclone had also begun

pulling up sea water at the eye of the vortex until it finally formed a towering column of water.

Estimating that there were about ten miles of ocean left between the cyclone and the Magnetic Magic Island, Link gave his 'sheep' one last whip before casting an invisibility spell over himself and Felina. At the same time, he infused some of his energy into a rune stone in his hand, making contact with Ferde's navy forces, who had been waiting at the harbor.

As they were high up in the air, Felina could see from afar that the High Elves on the island did not even realize the danger that they were in and were all looking for shelter from what they believed to merely be rain.

"Will they die?" Felina sounded somewhat worried.

Link, who could see the state of the island even more clearly than her, shook his head. "No. There are no more than a few hundred miners on the island. Also, there's a Level-7 High Elf Magic Sentry. His magic should be enough to protect the High Elf miners. Of course, the wind will blow them all away."

...

On the island

"This blasted weather. It was fine moments ago, what's with the sudden storm?" A High Elf miner hurriedly made for one of the treehouses, and once inside, began squeezing his clothes dry.

Suddenly, there was a shriek from outside. "Come out quick, it's a cyclone!"

The miner poked his head out of the window, and gaped at the approaching pillar of wind and clouds that towered over the island like a heavenly spear piercing through the heavens.

"Quick, let's get out of here!" He could hear the High Elf Magician's voice in the wind.

Quickly regaining his senses, the miner began running after the Magician and saw that the other miners, too, had fled from their shelters and assembled around the Magician.

The Magician took out a seed and began pouring Nature Power into it. As he threw the

seed into the sea, there was a sudden rumble, and from the water sprang forth a large amount of vines that twisted themselves into the shape of a long, narrow ship shaped like a spear.

"Quick, get on the boat, quick!" shouted the Magician, who got on the vessel first.

A few minutes later, all the miners had gotten on board. The Magician immediately focused his Nature Power into the ship, and the vine-made oars that lined the two sides of the ship began rowing themselves at top speed.

The ship then sent out a jet of Gyromagnetic Iron, propelling itself at a speed of more than fifty feet per second.

But it wasn't fast enough.

Five minutes later, the cyclone had now come upon the whole island.

"Oh my god, everything is destroyed!"

"My tree effigy's ruined!"

"This must be divine retribution!"

"Quick, Magician, it's catching up to us!"

"Be silent, I'm already doing the best I can," The Magician infused more of his energy into the ship desperately, accelerating it even more.

But it was no use. Six minutes passed, and the cyclone still did not let up its pursuit, reeling them in relentlessly with incredible suction, like the hand of a malevolent deity trying to scoop them all into the afterlife.

"Hold on tight!" The Magician madly infused the rest of his Nature Power into the ship, and vines began stretching out like tentacles from the ship, latching onto every member of the ship to hold them in place. At the same time, other vines arched above the ship, forming a sort of canopy over all of them.

There was a moment of weightlessness as the ship spun rapidly out of control and bobbed up and down, as if it was being carried off into the air.

This went on for half an hour before the ship finally fell to the sea. In the ball of vines, everyone's heads were still spinning, and the air inside was filled with the putrid smell of vomit.

"Ew, who threw up on my face? Disgusting!" said someone weakly.

"Somebody peed on me!"

"Eilos, you literally soiled yourself!"

It was utter pandemonium in the ball of vines.

Drawing the vine canopy open from above, the High Elf Magician leaned on one side of the ship and took out his compass. "Thank the gods we weren't blown too far away. Let's head back to the island and rest ourselves."

But just then, one of the High Elf miners shouted, "Look, there's a fleet of ships."

"It's a three-leaf flag. That's the fleet of Ferde. Oh, what do they want now?" said another miner, narrowing his eyes at the ships.

"Oh no, they're heading for the island!" exclaimed the High Elf Magician. "We cannot let them reach the island!"

The Magician stood up and pointed his magic wand in the air, producing a ball of green mist. At the same time, he cast a Sound Amplification spell and shouted towards the ships, "Help! Help!"

After shouting, he said in a low voice to the miners, "When they reach us, we'll let them escort us back to the Isle of Dawn, and not a word about our mines on the island, or there will be consequences!"

"Understood!" said the miners in unison, their faces grave.

Chapter 459

No Chance at All

Whoosh, splash. It was the sound of water splashing.

Ferde's fleet quickly moved past the High Elves' ships. Water splashed, drenching the High Elves that were crying for help.

Then the fleet of three large magic ships sailed away. The human sailors on the deck burst into laughter at how pathetic the High Elves looked. The fleet soon sailed away, ignoring them.

The drenched High Elves on the rattan ships were all dazed.

"They just sailed away?"

"They ignored us?"

"They saw us about to die, and they left?"

"I don't think we're gonna die..." someone said weakly.

The Magician finally processed everything. Gritting his teeth, he said, "Damn, they must've discovered the island!"

"What do we do now?" a miner asked.

The Magician shook his head. "We can't do anything for now. We're not their match and can't stop them. Let's go back to the Isle of Dawn and have our navy teach them a lesson!"

The High Elves had operated on the Isle of Dawn for many years, and their navy was the strongest. If they wanted to, they could defeat the navies of all the kingdoms as easily as the autumn wind sweeping away fallen leaves.

In Firuman, the High Elves were the bosses of the sea. No one could refute that.

The group of High Elves rowed the rattan paddles and grunted while going back to the Isle of Dawn.

After a while, a miner suddenly said, "Hey, don't you think it's coincidental? The storm just passed, and the Ferde fleet appeared, going straight to the island. Do you think they made that storm?"

"It's possible. Their lord is a Legendary Magician. He really might have that ability." Another miner grew suspicious too.

The High Elf Magician scoffed. "You know nothing!" he said derisively. "That storm isn't something a mortal can control. No Magician in the world could cast a spell like that unless he was a god!"

"Oh, I see. Those damn Ferdians are so f*cking lucky!" a miner swore.

In the sky, Link looked at the High Elves in the distance and said to Felina, "Let's go to the island too."

"But those High Elves said they're going to get the navy." Felina could read lips, so she was a bit worried. However, she still changed direction and flew towards the Magnetic Island.

"Don't worry. They won't be able to cause conflict because of the island," Link said with a laugh.

It would take one week for the High Elves to reach the Isle of Dawn. By then, it would be too late.

Felina quickly caught up with the fleet. She was still invisible. When they were above the fleet, Link jumped down from her back.

"Alright, your mission is complete. Go back to Ferde," Link said from the deck.

"Okay." Felina turned and left.

Link showed himself. Celine, Jacker, and the navy general were all on the deck. The three instantly went over to him.

The general's name was Grayson. Apparently, he used to be a pirate in the southern

seas and pillaged merchant ships but failed when attacking a Ferdian ship.

He was very skilled and didn't have a bad reputation. He only stole goods and never killed anyone, so Jacker forgave him. In the end, he decided not to leave. He even joined Ferde's guard and contributed greatly against the Delongan Royal Army.

When Ferde's navy was established, he naturally became the general.

For questions about the sea, Link had to ask him. "With our current situation, how much longer until we get to the Broken Isles?"

"Sir, we'll get there within two and a half hours!"

"Okay, good. I'll go rest. Let me know when we get there."

"Yes, sir."

"Celine, stop staying outside. Come to the cabin with me." Link waved at Celine. Ferde's navy was very strict, and the sailors were on the seas for long stretches of time. They were all like voracious beasts. Even a sow could catch their eye. It was dangerous for Celine to stand there.

"Oh, coming." Celine had felt uncomfortable this entire trip. She hurriedly hid inside the cabin with Link.

Once inside, Link sat down before the table. He took out the half-finished enchantment book and continued to write. After a while, he realized Celine felt bored, so he handed over a draft he'd finished. "This is the spell book I wrote. Help me punch holes on the side and string them together."

"Okay." Celine was happy to do this. She punched holes while reading and actually grew interested in the content. "Wow, so enchantments are this easy? I feel like even I can do it."

Link chuckled. "This is just basic enchantments for apprentices."

Celine had learned magic before, after all. Her level was even higher than most apprentices, and she was smart too. She would naturally find it easy.

She was stunned. "I see, but you make it sound interesting. It's more attractive than

those boring books I've read before. If you write books like this, I'll definitely study it."

Link's style was to first write an interesting, simple, and easily applicable example. For example, this copy described a basic talisman. It only used a dozen runes. After creating it and adding in Mana, it would turn into a talisman.

After the reader's interest was piqued, the book would start introducing the specific theory used. This process was interesting too. Link used common phenomena for comparison, and it was easy to understand.

Celine read three drafts and was ready to try. Hugging Link's arm, she whined, "I wanna try right now. Can I string the papers later?"

Link couldn't do anything. Since she liked it, he just said, "Fine, put the papers to the side. Here, experiment with these basic materials."

Celine happily went to experiment, allowing Link to focus on writing. Time flew by and two and a half hours passed by quickly.

Jacker's voice sounded from the outside. "Sir, we're here."

Link gathered his papers. He turned towards Celine but found her immersed in the enchantment, so he decided not to bother her. He snuck out of the cabin.

Outside, Link saw the Magnetic Magic Island that had been cleaned by the hurricane. The island was small—only 300 feet wide. It was actually just a piece of reef that had poked above the water surface.

"Throw the hooks," Link ordered. "Latch onto the edge!"

The sailors did as they were told. Half an hour later, dozens of prepared cables were tied to the island. There was a big iron picket at the end of the cables. The sailors tied the cables to the edge of the reef tightly. Then they slammed the pickets into the cracks with hammers.

Soon, the three warships connected four giant cables to the tiny island.

Link stood on the island. When the sailors were pretty much done, he called, "Alright, back to the ship!"

The sailors didn't know what Link was planning, but they immediately jumped back. Link stood in the center. He pressed down on the rock in the middle and poured in his Dragon Power. The Legendary Dragon Power dug into the rock and kept spreading, not stopping until it reached more than 1000 feet deep.

This distance wasn't his limit. However, Link felt that the mine was already quite sparse in this range. It would be meaningless to keep digging.

Taking a deep breath, he cast a Spatial Rend. "Break!"

Crack! There was a huge noise. The entire reef corner was shaken off of the foundation from the Spatial Rend.

The huge broken-off ore started to slide down the foundation, but Link's Dragon Power quickly extended across the entire reef. He activated the Higgs Force Field.

Under this force field, the entire piece of ore swelled like foam plastic. It somehow started floating, and the loose cables pulled tautly.

Everyone on the ship was dumbfounded.

"What are you waiting for? Start going back!" Link yelled.

He wouldn't mine so delicately like the High Elves; he just took the entire gyromagnetic iron mine away. It actually wasn't that big. He really wanted to make a spatial ring and put it all in.

However, this was good too. By the time the High Elves returned, the island would be gone, and the conflict would be unnecessary. Everything was gone. Heh.

Jacker finally reacted. Pushing down his shock, he yelled, "Hurry, hurry! Start going back!"

General Grayson ran to the captain's room while yelling, "Pull the sails! Add wind Mana to the left full rudder at 20%!"

Whoosh! Mana flowed through, and the three warships started pulling the giant ore towards Ferde.

The ore began gaining speed. Finally, it was maintained at 100 feet per second. During

this entire time, Link stood on it. He used the force field to maintain the mine's balance so it wouldn't capsize the three ships.

This was probably the most aggressive mining technique in the history of Firuman.

On the other hand, the High Elf Magician and more than 100 miners were still diligently rowing their ship, getting closer to the Dawn of Isle.

"Go! Go! Brothers, when we get to the Dawn of Isle, we'll teach those lowly humans a lesson!"

"Hey, hey, we're hard-working miners!"

"Hey, hey, we use our hands to create wealth!"

"Hey, hey!"

It was unknown who started it, but while these miners sweated over the paddles, they started singing. The ship sped up quite a bit.

They rowed like that for many hours, using up all their energy and spirit. All of them were as tired as dogs, panting with their tongues out.

Just then, a black dot suddenly appeared in the horizon. "Look," a sailor pointed out. "I think it's our merchant ship!"

The Isle of Dawn and Ferde Territory had a very close trade relationship. The Isle of Dawn produced magic equipment, valuable medicinal resources, and tonics. Ferde sold them natural resources from all over the world.

As of now, the Isle of Dawn earned twice as much as Ferde. They couldn't help it. It wasn't their fault the High Elves were so advanced.

The Magician immediately said, "That's great. The ship will definitely have a white-tailed owl for sending messages. We'll have them send a letter back!"

"Yes, have our warships come and teach those humans!" The miners waved their fists. Today was more frustrating than any other event in history!

Chapter 460

Unacceptable!

Whoosh!

The sound of waves crashing against each other could be heard as, like flying saucers, three magic warships raced across the surface of a seemingly boundless ocean.

The magic warships were fifty feet long, their streamlined bodies covered by a hazy layer of purple dotted by what looked like stars. On the deck stood a mast, on which hung a sail with a silver sparrow flower on it. Around the flower was a ring of brambles and thorns, which was in turn surrounded by countless magical runes.

The fleet belonged to the Silver Storm Sparrows, feared by all seafarers across the ocean of Firuman.

At this moment, their sails were full with the winds of the sea, propelling all three ships at an incredible speed.

On the deck of the foremost warship stood a well-built High Elf with a bit of white hair growing out of his temples who was busy inspecting the conditions of the ocean in front of them through a high-powered telescope.

They had received an order from their queen at ten in the morning.

The queen had ordered them to head straight for the Broken Isles, drive the Ferde warships off the isles, and gain control of the mines back from them.

She had also instructed her fleet to engage the enemy ships in combat, and if push came to shove, they were permitted to sink any of those warships, but only on the condition that the first strike came from the enemy, and that the whole thing was recorded in a Memory Crystal.

The Broken Isles finally appeared in the horizon, but what was startling was the fact that there did not seem to be any sign of the Ferde fleet.

On the deck, the High Elf put down his telescope and turned to another High Elf who was dressed like a Magician. "Master Vonhelon, do you feel any magical activity?"

The High Elf Magician Vonhelon was a Level-9 Pinnacle Spatial Magician, commander of the ninth Battle Magic Legion, as well as magical advisor of the queen for life.

He and 300 other Elite Battle Mages were on board as contingency against any magical confrontation.

Naturally, they were looking out for Link, the lord of Ferde, and the Legendary Magician himself.

The magic of the High Elves held unfathomable secrets. A Level-9 Pinnacle Magician and 300 other Level-7 Elite Battle Mages, equipped with an assortment of powerful magical gear and magical circles may not have had the flexibility of one Legendary Magician, but it would be enough to go toe to toe with him.

This was all proven and battle-tested by the prophet of this generation of High Elves, Bryant.

In truth, in the game world, the High Elves had once sent a few hundred Magicians in an assault on Orida Fortress, which was merely a small portion of the High Elves' magical forces.

Only in the face of worsening circumstances in the later stages of the game did the High Elves begin dispatching thousands of their battle mages into the fray.

All in all, though the High Elves lived exclusively on the Isle of Dawn, they were the pinnacle of all of Firuman in terms of military strength. They simply didn't have the manpower to efficiently rule all the races on the continent should they have decided to conquer all of Firuman.

Ever since the Mana Disaster 3,000 years before, the High Elves had adopted the policy of 'Pride in Isolation.'

Through such a policy, they had established their stronghold on a massive island far away from the continent in order to gain a positional advantage over the rest of the continent. In the process, they managed to keep the humans on the continent under their thumb by intervening in any attempts of unification among the human race, which involved either instigating a rebellion or an assassination.

They would take such an approach against not only humans, but the other races of the continent, as well.

For 3,000 years, the High Elves had maintained their position at the top of all of Firuman by relying on their superiority in magical power and unequalled cunning.

The races of the continent had seen much war and bloodshed against one another for thousands of years, the lives of their people in constant poverty and pandemonium. Only the High Elves remained unsullied by any form of warfare, living on the Isle of Dawn in relative peace and luxury.

The High Elves had always been the lofty observers of every great change in history, sneering at the myopia of pitiful mortals constantly at war with one another on the main continent. To ordinary people, they were calm and dignified existences, untroubled by the affairs of the rest of the world.

Barring any prejudice one might have against them, there was no doubt that the High Elves were a terrifyingly intelligent race.

On the deck of the ship, Vonhelon shook his head. "Captain Langdon, I don't sense any magical activity from the island. The Spatial Wheel has also indicated that everything is normal, and nobody has used any spatial magic there."

Captain Langdon frowned, then raised a hand as he gave an order to his crew. "Ready the defense circles, prepare for battle!"

Things were a bit too quiet. There was the possibility that the enemy could be using a high-level spell to hide their presence, and any ambush from such a high-level opponent would cost them their lives if they were unprepared.

The three Silver Storm Sparrow warships spread out in a triangle formation, slowing down considerably. Magical energy swirled in the middle of the triangle, where an insubstantial magical bond began forming between the three ships.

If it was any other fleet from the continent, they wouldn't be so cautious. However, the opponent they were up against was the lord of Ferde, who was also a Legendary Spatial Magician and definitely someone they should not let their guard down against.

Fwoosh! The waves now lapped gently against the warships, and the senses of the High Elves on board were all tautened, ready for any sign of an attack.

The warships were now slowly approaching the Broken Isles. Half an hour later, they had reached the outer region of the Broken Isles.

Throughout all this, Captain Langdon kept a wary eye out on his surroundings, not once putting his telescope down.

Gradually, he began to sense something was amiss. It was as if there was something missing from the picture, but he couldn't quite tell what it was.

"Master Vonhelon, do you feel that?" he whispered, the telescope still attached to one eye. The feeling in him that something was wrong had not yet subsided.

"Strange, what's missing here?" In all his years as captain, Langdon had passed by the Broken Isles many times and felt a sense of security every time he glanced at them.

He had been the first to discover the Magnetic Magic Island, which had suddenly emerged two years ago in the ocean. He figured it was probably a reef that had risen to the surface or a huge meteor that had landed in the ocean.

Wait a minute, where was the mining island?

Langdon finally realized what was wrong.

Vonhelon had made the same observation at the same time as him and cried out, "The mining island's disappeared!"

How was this possible?

While the mining island was not too big, it wasn't small enough to be carried off, either. At a size of more than 100 square feet, and weighing more than 1,000 tons, such a huge object could not have simply vanished into thin air!

The two High Elves stood on the deck looking at each other, flabbergasted. After a while, Langdon asked, "The Magnetic Magic Island only recently surfaced. Do you think it could have sunk back into the ocean?"

"I have no idea. Let's take a closer look." Vonhelon's brows knitted together, as he felt that things were not as simple as they seemed.

The three Silver Storm Sparrows began advancing slowly. Half an hour later, they

finally reached where the Magnetic Magic Island used to be. A group of High Elves were dispatched to search the area for the island, but could not find a single hint as to where it could have possibly been.

"It's gone." Langdon took off his captain's hat and ran his fingers through his thick mass of dark green hair. He still could not figure out what had happened.

Vonhelon stood on one side of the ship, his eyes filled with a silver glow as he began magically scanning as far as 200 feet beneath the ocean waters for any trace of the island, but still, he found nothing.

Two hundred feet was the limit of his underwater probing. Seeing nothing but the inky darkness of the ocean water, he finally gave up.

The loss of a such a valuable piece of land would have been a great hit to anyone.

Captain Langdon walked to the Magician's side and asked with a frown, "Master, do you think the people of Ferde had something to do with this?"

Vonhelon shook his head. "I don't know, I really don't know what happened here."

This had truly surpassed the limits of his imagination. If the people of Ferde had indeed made the whole island disappear, how had they done it? He could not think of any way they could have accomplished such a feat.

Langdon wasn't content with the lack of answers. He ordered the fleet to circle around the area for something, but still, no one managed to turn up anything. The absence of the mining island and the fleet of Ferde was aggravating.

"Now what?" He looked at Vonhelon, open to all suggestions at this point.

At a loss himself regarding what to do next, Vonhelon pondered for a long time before saying, "I suppose there's not much else to do here other than record everything and report back to the queen."

"I guess that's all we can do for now."

The High Elves bustled about on the three ships, putting together an account of all they had seen and heard. When all was said and done, Captain Langdon finally gave the order to set course for home.

Two days later, the Silver Storm Sparrow reached the port of the Isle of Dawn. Vonhelon rushed immediately to the Jade Palace, bringing with him news of the island's disappearance to the High Elf Queen.

He met the queen, who was with the Legendary Magician Bryant, at the Garden of Magic.

After seeing the contents of Vonhelon's Memory Crystal, the High Elf Queen asked Bryant, "Who do you think is responsible for this?"

Bryant spread his hands out and answered her with certainty, "There's no question about it. Be it a freak storm, or a vanishing mining Island, it has to be Link behind all this."

As a Legendary Magician himself, Bryant was familiar with this level of power. Anyone at the Legendary power level would be capable of extraordinary feats that no ordinary being would even dream of.

Though he still didn't know how Link had managed to pull it off, he was certain that with the correct method, he, too, could do something like this.

The High Elf Queen had drifted off into a reverie. After a while, she finally said, "The other party has not left any evidence of foul play. This may be troublesome."

Their opponent had outsmarted them in such a way that the High Elves were not in a position to retaliate. To have a whole mining island stolen from them was a loss the High Elves had not experienced in over 3,000 years.

This really was unacceptable!

Chapter 461

Make a Fortune Without a Sound

On the sea

The three Ferdian warships dragged the giant thing and sailed slowly on the sea. They didn't go towards Ferde and leave the thing there. Otherwise, the entire world would know that they stole the High Elves' island, and that would cause a bunch of problems.

For things like this, it was better to make a fortune without a sound.

They sailed for three days, carefully avoiding all other ships. By dusk of the third day, the three warships stopped in a secluded bay in the south of Ferde. It was around six miles from land.

"Alright, all of you go back to the pier. Remember, nothing happened today!" Link said to Jacker, who was on the warship.

"Understood!" Jacker saluted at Link.

Whoosh. The warships started steering towards the Ferde Port. Link stood on the giant floating mine, watching them fade into the distance.

He took a deep breath and started pouring Dragon Power into the ore. After a few seconds, the Dragon Power was equally distributed inside the ore. He used more than 10,000 points during this process.

"Spatial Distortion: Anti-gravity Force Field!"

With a soft hum, a thin ring of detailed runes spread out across the surface with Link as the center. Two seconds later, it surrounded the entire piece of ore.

The first time Link used Spatial Distortion was at the Northern Skeletal Fort. It was still a Spatial Distortion spell but now, it was much more complex and detailed than before. This spell contained Link's all-new understanding of space and rich experience.

The runes lasted for two seconds. Then this hundred-thousand-ton rock started floating up. Whoosh, whoosh. The water around it washed away, slowly revealing the true shape of the ore.

Originally, the rock was 300 feet wide and 900 feet high. After Link changed it with the enchantment spell, its bulk was at least eight times larger and had doubled in size.

When this giant piece of rock was 60 feet in the air, it was practically like a floating city!

The Dragon Power he'd added in was being burned up at 500 points per second. Link knew he couldn't maintain it for long. Using his thoughts, he pushed the rock towards Ferde at 120 feet per second.

Whoosh, whoosh. Gales of wind sounded in Link's ears. It was the sound of this giant rock tearing through the air.

After around 20 seconds, it was thousands of feet inland and Link couldn't keep going. He sagged and the huge rock plummeted. Two seconds later, there was a muffled boom. The ground was crushed and the rock cracked into many big pieces.

Link estimated that if he used the Anti-gravity Force Field to lift something that heavy to 2500 feet in the air and slammed it down, its power would be equivalent to a Legendary spell.

Of course, doing that was too stupid. If he was disturbed while doing it, he would be in trouble. He was just imagining it for fun.

The place Link chose was very remote. The soil was rocky and infertile so no one lived around here. Naturally, no one noticed this commotion.

Throwing down the ore, Link used the force field to float down slowly.

While descending, he suddenly felt that he should use a force field to make a spell for him to travel faster. He didn't dare use it before because his Mana recovery rate was too slow. Flight spells would use up a lot of Mana and make him vulnerable. But now, his Dragon Power was recovering at 30 points per second. If he could make a spell that used up less than 30 points, he could travel without tiring out.

That's a good plan. I'll develop it as soon as I have time. It has to be flexible and as fast

as possible. At least, it can't be slower than my dragon form... Wait, if I add this force field to my dragon form, won't I be even faster?

The more Link thought of it, the more amazing it felt.

By then, he had landed on the rock. He had around 3000 Dragon Power points left so he poured it in again, reaching the rock surrounding the ore.

"Higgs Force Field!"

The rock instantly became as soft as water. The gyromagnetic iron started sinking into the "rock water." After a few seconds, the entire piece of ore was hidden within the water.

After this, Link let out a relieved breath. Heh, even if the High Elves discover this, I can say it's Ferde's own mine. They have no evidence and can't take it away. They can only stare at it.

This was around 30 miles from Scorched City. Link jumped down from the rock and started sprinting towards Ferde. He was so fast that he made it within ten minutes.

Link told Lucy of the location of the gyromagnetic iron to Lucy. She would arrange everything after this while Link went back to his Mage Tower.

Even with his physical strength, he was exhausted from all these days' work. At the top level, he filled the large bathtub with hot water. He rested in the hot water for half an hour before he recovered.

While lying there, he heard a click from the entrance of the hall. Celine was back. She'd taken the ship to the port so she was a bit slower.

Seeing that Link was back and still in the tub, she also stripped and walked in. Sitting across from Link, she washed herself while saying, "Link, I'm going to start learning enchantment magic!"

Link laughed. "I hope you don't lose interest fast."

"I definitely won't! Look at my Mana." Celine swam towards Link and cuddled up to him. She reached out and released Mana. A dark blue ball of light appeared on her pale and delicate palms.

When the light appeared, Link felt his heart skip. This was a sign of his soul being affected. He was a Legendary Magician and had a powerful soul. It was impressive that his soul could be so easily affected.

He studied the ball of Mana. Unexpectedly, it was at Level-7. It looked like dark blue, but if he squinted, he could make out endless magic runes flowing within.

So powerful. No wonder Celine has the foresight talent. This is such unique bloodline magic... This is the power of time. When I have time, I'll have to study it. Link sighed within. No wonder Nozama, the Lord of the Deep, tried everything to get this daughter back to the Abyss. If trained, Celine could definitely become a terrifying soldier.

"How about it? Am I powerful?" Celine asked proudly. "Of all the Magicians in the Mage Tower, only Elliard is a bit stronger than me. The others are all weaker." She put her Mana away and rested her head against Link's chest. While drawing circles on his muscle, she murmured, "When I learn enchantments, I'll modify my large fire gun until it's a Legendary weapon. By then, even you can't beat me, haha."

She had a great vision and Link had to support her. "Your Mana is indeed enough to learn enchantments. I'll be writing spells during this time. Just take them and if you have questions, write them down. I'll answer them at night."

Celine was satisfied. "I knew you'd support me. Here, let me reward you."

She turned and sat in Link's lap... After a while, Celine was tired and fell asleep. Link was revitalized. He returned to his library and started writing.

The night was silent.

The next morning, Lucy came to report about the gyromagnetic iron. Her eyes were bloodshot; she probably didn't sleep at all. Handing a scroll to Link, she said, "Lord, we've already built the mine and arranged the mining work. According to the plan, this mine can support 18 months of financial operations."

"Eighteen months... that should be enough." Link nodded. He was very satisfied with this. It was enough for him to establish the enchantment industry as a pillar in Ferde.

There were two obstacles in completing this: enchanters and High Elves.

Currently, almost all advanced enchantment equipment in Firuman were produced by

High Elves. It was practically a monopoly. Link would be stealing business from them.

This would be challenging but that would be for later. Right now, he needed a large amount of enchanters. Where would he get them? Other than training them in his Mage Tower, another source would be the magic academies all over. Amongst them, the East Cove Magic Academy was the most important.

Seeing Lucy's fatigue, he tapped her lightly and cast Essence Vitality, a dragon healing spell.

Essence Vitality

Level-10 Legendary Healing Spell

Cost: 1200 points

Effect: Dragon Power transforms into the essence of light and pours into the target's body. It can greatly raise their vitality. The duration decreases as the target's level increases. It can last at most 30 days.

(Note: Gift from the Red Dragon Queen.)

Lucy had worked the entire night and kept yawning. Her head felt heavy and dizzy too. But with this spell, she shivered and then all the fatigued disappeared. She was hundreds of times livelier, as if she had an infinite amount of energy.

She knew this was the spell's power. "Thank you."

Link smiled. "Alright, don't tire yourself out. There are many things you can tell other people to do. You're my most important manager."

"I'll keep that in mind." Lucy's heart was warm. However, she was totally energized now. As soon as she left Link's room, she dove back into work.

Link chuckled. Scorched City was able to develop so quickly and the territory was able to improve all because of these loyal followers.

By now, Link had finished the Enchantment Outline and Basic Enchantments. He spent another hour packaging them into books. After letting Celine know, he got a carriage and started towards the airship stop in Scorched Ridge.

The airship stop obviously belonged to the Yabbas. It wasn't open to the public yet. As the lord, only he could use it. The airships there could count as his private jets.

After getting in, Link said, "To the East Cove Magic Academy."

If he wanted to find talents from the academy, he would obviously need his tutor Herrera's help. The two books he had were basic enchantment books. Link prepared to publish them to give his new writing career a good reputation.

After this, he planned on writing intermediate and advanced enchantment spells, and even at the expert level. He would keep these higher-level books secret. They would become the core of his planned workshops' competitive edge.

Chapter 462

The Incurable Illness

From the sky, one could clearly see the patches of ravaged earth scattered throughout Girvent Forest from the devastation of a recent war.

The forces of Delonga had been annihilated completely in the war against Ferde's army. Also taking into account the fact that Link was the Legendary Magician presiding over Ferde, Delonga had no choice but to retreat.

Unfortunately, just as he had expected, Delonga's sworn enemy, the kingdom of Southmoon, didn't pass up such a chance to swoop in for the kill.

At this moment, the kingdom of Southmoon had planned on dealing the finishing blow to Delonga in his moment of weakness.

As both Ferde and the Southmoon Kingdom were allies, Link could not have wished for a better outcome.

Once the kingdom of Southmoon finished off Delonga, business between Ferde and Southmoon would be even smoother than before.

While Link's head was filled with such thoughts, the airship pilot in front said to him, "My lord, we're approaching East Cove Magic Academy. Do you wish to land inside?"

"No, try to land as far from the academy as you can. Don't want to give the people inside a fright."

He was now a Legendary Magician, and also the first officially recognized Legendary Magician among the human race. If news of his return got out, everyone from the academy would come out in full force to welcome him, and that would be a big waste of his time.

On a patch of empty land in the woods outside East Cove, the airship landed. Link exited the vessel and began heading for the East Cove Magic Academy. After walking a few feet towards it, he used Dimensional Jump, making the necessary calculations.

Hum. There was a bright white light, and Link vanished instantly. A few seconds later, he was standing in front of Herrera's magic tower.

The academy was quiet, as always. There were a few magician's apprentices running down the stone path leading towards the magic tower. They didn't seem to notice Link, who had suddenly apparated there.

Walking up to the magic tower's entrance, Link gently tapped on the rune of the entrance. A soft bell-like sound echoed within. After a while, the door opened, and an apprentice, no more than fifteen or sixteen years old, peeked out from behind it.

He looked at Link and was stunned for a bit before he asked, "Hi, can I help you?"

Link was wearing a dark blue Assassin's Robe with a sword hanging from his waist. Judging by his muscular physique, the apprentice figured that he must have been a warrior. The warrior's body was adorned with a dazzling assortment of magical equipment, and at that point, the apprentice had refrained from making any further assumptions of the person in front of him.

"Is Master Moira here? I have some business with her."

"You wish to see the advisor? Um, she's currently not in the tower."

Slightly disappointed, Link asked again, "Then, do you know where she is now?"

"She's probably at the Heaven's Thorn. She should be back soon."

"I see. By the way, is Magician Rylai in?" Link asked once more, deciding to see his disciple.

"She's in. Wait here, I'll go get her."

"Alright." Link stood by the door and waited for him.

The magician apprentice closed the door behind him. A moment later, the door opened again, and Rylai stepped out of the tower, smiling.

She was a bit puzzled by this at first, as she did not really have any warrior acquaintances, but upon seeing Link, her face immediately split into a smile, and she shouted gleefully, "Master, why are you here?"

Link smiled back gently. "I'm here to see my master, as well as my own disciple. Aren't you going to let me in?"

"Oh, come on in. Auntie Herrera will be back shortly." Rylai skipped cheerfully like a child as she led the way.

Her effusive demeanor startled some of the new apprentices in the great hall.

"Who's the warrior with Rylai, and why's she so friendly with him?" asked the apprentice who had opened the door for Link.

"I don't know. I haven't heard of any powerful warriors in the kingdom these days... Why did the other apprentices suddenly stand up?" asked one of the newcomers.

He felt himself being pulled up forcefully as one of his companions stood up beside him as well. A low voice whispered in his ear, "What are you still sitting around for, that's the lord of Ferde!"

"What lord of Ferde? Ah!" The student quaked in sudden realization and stood upright a bit too quickly. There was a sharp pain in his knee, and he staggered forward, falling to a half-kneel on the ground.

Wasn't the lord of Ferde Link, one of the senior apprentices of the academy, and supposedly the first ever Legendary Magician on the continent? How could he not have recognized him?

The youth who had opened the door for Link was muttering beside the newcomer, "Ah, to have missed out on such a great chance... I really should put my eyes out for not having recognized him sooner!"

Amid the din, Link followed Rylai to the magic tower's second floor. At first, Rylai had wanted him to wait at the second floor, but Link smiled at her and said, "No, let's wait at the great hall on the top floor."

He walked on, this time followed by Rylai.

Upon reaching the entrance to the great hall on the top floor, Link entered the password on a rune beside the door. With a click, the door opened.

The password was still the same as when he had still been an apprentice in the

academy.

When they entered the great hall, Link sat on one of the benches, then beckoned to an awkward Rylai with a smile. "Come sit in front of me and take out your notebook. I'll help you solve some of your problems."

"All right." Rylai visibly relaxed as she sat down and handed her notebook to Link.

Link flipped through the thin book for around ten minutes and managed to grasp Rylai's progress in her magical studies. He indicated an analysis of a Level-3 spell called the Ring of Frost to her and said, "You've made a mistake here. At room temperature, the element of water is especially fluid. To have it attain a metallic sharpness, the magical structure should be like this."

Link extended a finger and traced out the revised version of the magical structure in the air.

Rylai was deep in thought. Ten minutes later, her face brightened. "I see. No wonder I couldn't seal up the experimental magic puppet with my Ring of Frost."

She asked, "What about my hydrotherapy spell? The last time I tried to treat a rabbit according to the instructions given, it ended up dead. Though such accidents have been rare, I'm a bit scared now to use this spell."

Link flipped to the page where she had written down her notes on hydrotherapy. She had recorded down the results of her experiment. From the looks of it, she had felt extremely guilty about killing the rabbit, as she had written down a detailed account of the whole process.

After looking through it, Link understood the reason behind the rabbit's death and smiled at her. "It's alright, there was no problem with your spell. The problem lies in the rabbit. You described the rabbit's whole body as swollen, and there was a viscous fluid coming out of its eyes, correct?"

"Yes, the poor thing."

Link gave his analysis of the problem at hand. "It was probably a textbook case of elemental imbalance. It was suffering from edema. As an immune defense, its body had instinctively absorbed an excessive amount of water in order to flush out the toxins in its body. At this point, its body was already saturated with too much water.

Through your hydrotherapy, its elemental balance was broken, causing the rabbit's internal systems to collapse as a result."

"Ah, so I was the one who killed it?" Rylai's eyes were swimming with tears.

"Not really, it was a terminal disease. Think of it as a form of euthanasia. All right now, don't cry. I'm going to give you an explanation of the principles of basic magical treatment so that you won't make the same mistake again."

"Okay," said Rylai, wiping her tears away.

Link then wrote the following line below Rylai's notes on hydrotherapy: 'The key to effective treatment is the maintenance of internal balance. Achieving elemental balance in another body will greatly improve its chances of recovering from a disease. Of course, things aren't always that simple... '

Link began teaching his disciple the main principles of the art of magical treatment. Rylai listened attentively, and every time she hit a problem, she would puzzle over it for a moment, but only ask Link for further explanation if she couldn't solve it herself.

Link would answer her questions with only one sentence, or even one word at times, and Rylai would feel even more enlightened with each answer.

Time flew by in silence as both master and disciple sat in front of one another, completely engrossed in their discussion. All of a sudden, there was a chink from the door of the great hall. Someone had returned.

Without even looking, Link knew that Herrera had entered the room. Her voice reverberated from outside the great hall. "Oh, seems like we have a guest today."

She entered the hall, a warm and gentle smile on her face.

Link stood up and bowed before her. "Advisor."

Though he had already completed his apprenticeship with her, he still had nothing but gratitude for having received her tutelage in the past.

Herrera looked at Link, somewhat overcome by emotion. "Ah, time sure does go by fast. In a blink of an eye, you've already reached heights never before attained by any other human."

When the two sat down, Link asked, "Advisor, you seem a bit down today. Is something the matter?"

Although Herrera's face wore a smile, Link had known her for so long that he knew whenever there was something troubling her. The tips of her brows would droop down slightly, and her eyes wouldn't open up as much as usual. Link was familiar with all the facial tics of his former advisor.

Slightly stunned by this, Herrera gave Link a forced smile. "Am I that easy to read?"

"No, I just know you too well," said Link with a laugh.

Herrera sighed. "There is indeed a problem. Up north is a small town called Garrason, where a strange illness afflicts the citizens. Those infected lose all reason and gain a significant boost in strength, then proceed to attack anyone and anything on sight in a frenzy. The disease is also highly infectious; anyone bitten, scratched, or in some cases touched by the infected are infected themselves. Symptoms show within at least ten minutes upon infection."

Link was taken aback. "Can't the priests treat them?"

From Herrera's description, it sounded like an epidemic.

"That's the most frightening thing about it, the disease can't be treated by any divine spell!"

Link fell silent. A few seconds later, he asked suddenly, "The state of Garrason doesn't look too promising, does it?"

Herrera kneaded her forehead. "I guess there's no point in hiding it from you. Truth be told, Garrason was just the source of this epidemic. The disease is spreading at a terrifying rate beyond the city's borders, and right now, things have gotten a bit out of control."

Chapter 463

The Dean is Angry

Mage Tower

Herrera waved her hands. "Let's move on. It's rare for you to come back. I shouldn't worry you about these things. The military will take care of it, and the dean already went there a week ago. They should be able to get it under control."

Things seemed urgent, but those who had gone mad were all ordinary citizens. No matter what, their combat abilities were limited. Magicians and the military were enough.

Link shook his head. "Tutor, you seem worried. The disease might not be so simple... There shouldn't be any cases at the academy, right?"

Herrera sighed. "There are some. One is inside my magic cage."

"Take me to them," Link said. Not even the God of Light's divine spell could cure them, and they showed characteristics of a contagious disease. This was strange and unsettled him.

Since Link wanted to see, Herrera wouldn't refuse him. Standing up, she said, "Come with me."

The three walked out of the room. Rylai was curious and wanted to see, but Link shooed her away halfway there. "This is for adults. You go read your books."

Rylai pouted and walked away sadly. Link and Herrera entered the basement of the Mage Tower.

The basement had three floors. The top floor was for food storage. The next was the negative energy pool of the Mage Tower, and the last floor was the magic cage.

Most of those imprisoned there were commonly-seen creatures, such as low-level werewolves, young vampires, and corpse-eating spirits. They weren't powerful and

were used to educate scholars.

The mad patient was imprisoned there, as well.

There were many independent cells in the prison. All the cells were shaped like beehives, and the entrances were locked with translucent magic doors. When the door opened, the creatures all started howling and crying. When they saw Herrera, they started yelling even louder. Some of the more human-like ones even threatened her.

"Let me go, Magician. Otherwise, I'll rip you apart one day!" a werewolf with sharp claws said.

"Evil witch, you're dead! Dead! Dead!" That came from a human-faced black widow spider. It sped around its web and shrieked in its piercing voice.

"Oh, oh, so tasty. So delicious!" That was a small corpse-eating spirit.

Then Link entered the hall.

The cells that had been unruly a moment ago instantly silenced. Many creatures shrunk into corners and hid. The human-faced widow spider shook and fell down from its web with a clunk.

Herrera giggled. "These things are only scared of the difficult ones."

The creatures were sensitive and knew that Herrera was easy to sway, so they liked to throw insults. However, Link had killed countless people on the Northern battlefield and had a deathly air about him. Others might not have been able to sense it, but these creatures discovered it instantly. Faced with this, they were all terrified.

Walking along the tunnel, Herrera stopped at the back right corner. "It's this cell."

With a soft poof, she cast a light spell above the cell and illuminated it. Through the translucent magic door, Link saw a person squatting in the corner. He was a muscular man around thirty-five years old. He wore a regular merchant robe, but the fabric had been ripped. It hung around him in shreds.

Stimulated by the bright light, the man looked up blankly at the white light on the ceiling. This allowed Link to see his eyes.

They had become pure black with no sclera or pupil. His eyes were like two black sockets. Then Link looked to his hands, feet, and teeth. There were no changes; they were just like an ordinary man's.

"The eyes are the only change," Herrera whispered. "The other abnormalities are all in action and behavior. Look how he's squatting right now. Doesn't he look like an animal?"

Indeed, he squatted with his hands on the ground. He looked like he would pounce at any moment.

"Open the magic door. Show me his fighting abilities," Link said.

Herrera nodded. Before opening the door, she reminded him, "Don't think he's always this quiet. When he's active, he's quite fast."

"I understand."

Buzz. The moment the door opened, the man's head whipped over. A guttural sound came from his throat and he jumped, pouncing towards Link. He really was quite fast—equal to a Level-1 Warrior. But in Link's eyes, his movements were in slow motion.

Without even using his wand, he reached out. Dragon Power surged and a Spatial Sphere appeared. The person froze in mid-air.

Link walked closer to investigate. The man's face was menacing, teeth bared and muscles pulled taut. His skin was pale and wrinkled. He had many rotting ulcers. The worst was on his left leg, where the skin and muscle was decayed to the bone. He didn't seem to feel any pain. He just looked wild and savage.

It seemed that he'd completely become an animal.

Link circled him and found something that made no sense.

"There are no maggots in his ulcers. Did you treat him?" Link asked. The ulcers were so deep and the environment was so dirty. There would usually be maggots all over, but this man had none.

Herrera shook her head. "Not at all. Maybe his blood is toxic."

"I didn't sense any abnormal auras in him, either. It looks just like a regular disease. How long does it usually last?"

"I don't know the specific timeframe, but this guy is from the first batch. It's already been three weeks. He eats everything and until now, there have been no weaknesses other than the ulcers."

Link wasn't very familiar with diseases and couldn't find anything wrong by looking. After a few minutes, he shook his head. "Other than losing his mind, I can't find anything. It looks like rabies, but they live longer."

This disease couldn't be cured with divine spells and spread quickly. Other than that, it was nothing special. It wasn't very threatening, either. Now that the military and Magicians had joined the cause, they could definitely control it.

Link had been unsettled before. After seeing this patient, he felt more reassured. He left the cell, and Herrera closed the magic door again.

"How do you usually treat these patients?"

"We haven't found an antidote yet. The only thing we can do to most patients is kill them and then burn the corpses," Herrera said.

Link considered this, then asked, "If a regular person lives near them, is it possible for them to catch the disease?"

"Yes, but not very likely. It's more possible for weaker ones to be infected. The stronger and healthier you are, the lower the possibility. Currently, nobody above Level-4 will be infected unless they're bitten."

Herrera's explanation was very detailed. It was clear she'd studied this plague.

Hearing this, Link's worries were mostly gone. He sighed. "Tutor, you're right. The military and Magicians can easily control the spread of this disease. I hope they can hurry so fewer people will die."

"Hopefully. And I hope the alchemists can quickly find a cure." Herrera walked out and said, "All right, we can discuss your matters now."

Link nodded and handed over the two enchantment books. "I plan on creating an

enchantment workshop in Ferde. For this, I want to recruit some Magicians who specialize in enchantments. Apprentices will work, too. I can train them. I wrote these two books for this."

Herrera paused to flip through the pages. Intrigued, she said, "Let's go back to the top level. I want to read closely."

"Of course."

The two went to the hall in the top level, and Herrera started reading seriously. She read quickly, and the books were simple, without much content. She finished quickly. At the end, she looked up as if anticipating more. "Is that it?"

The book started off complicated and ended simply. It was very interesting, without any of the usual, boring parts. The enchantment methods included were also innovative. Even she was inspired and wanted to go experiment with them.

There were only two books. Herrera felt that she'd only taken two bites and the delicious meal was already gone. It didn't sate her at all!

"Yeah, I only wrote two books." Link shrugged.

"There's no problem in looking for Magicians," Herrera said. "I'll publish this news. Many Magicians will definitely come to you. However, these two books aren't enough for a thank you gift. These are great for the basics, but they're too simple. There's none of the truly good content."

With that, Herrera looked at Link and smiled. It was clear that she required more gifts.

Link sighed. "I'll send more books as soon as I finish writing. However, only these two can be published. The others will be for your eyes only."

"That's better. And how come the foreword for the outline is blank?" Herrera asked.

Link chuckled. "I was hoping you could fill it in for me."

Herrera smiled. "I would be honored to."

She immediately picked up her pen. Link took a book and started reading casually. While reading, his ears twitched. He looked out the window.

Outside the window, a group of carriages were entering the East Cove Magic Academy. When they stopped, Link saw Dean Anthony bring a team of Magicians in. Judging from his expression, he was furious.

"Tutor, the dean is back. The situation doesn't look so good."

Herrera walked over and did a double take. Seeing Dean Anthony throw his hat to the ground, she furrowed her brows. "I've known him for more than twenty years. He's never lost his temper like this. What happened?"

Chapter 464

The Demon Abel

"Idiot! Madman! Butcher!"

Anthony walked towards the Heaven's Thorn in large strides. As he was using a magical prosthesis, his gait was unsteady. Walking a bit too quickly, he stumbled and quickly used the Magician's Hand to realign his body and prevent himself from falling to the ground.

The Magicians behind him all followed Anthony without a word. Most of their faces were grave, while those of the younger Magicians seemed disapproving towards him, as if not in agreement with what Anthony had to say.

Once Anthony regained his balance, he continued striding on, and in no time, finally reached the Heaven's Thorn. Upon entering the Mage Tower, he then seated himself on the first floor of the great hall. He heaved a sigh at nobody in particular, and then fell silent for a long while, sitting there like a statue.

He loathed the fact that just when the kingdom was finally able to settle down, he had to deal with a self-righteous tyrant with such a huge following. Not to mention, he was completely powerless to do anything about it.

While Anthony fumed, a gentle voice spoke to him, "Is there something wrong, Dean?"

"What else is there? It's the madman, Abel... Wait, you're... Link, why are you here?" Anthony stopped short, sensing that something was not right. He lifted his head again to take a better look at the face to whom the voice had belonged, and sure enough, it was one of his former apprentices, Link, who was standing beside Herrera.

These two were the pride of East Cove Magic Academy. Herrera was already a Level-8 Magician, whose magic now rivaled even his, while Link's magical abilities had already reached the Legendary level. Upon seeing them, Anthony was able to relax a bit.

"Sit, do sit, don't just stand there," he said to both of them.

Link and Herrera both sat down, and then Link asked, "Were you referring to Duke Abel of Orida Fortress?"

Anthony's face fell as soon as he heard his name. He nodded. "I don't know any other Abel. Do you know what he did?"

Link and Herrera glanced at each other and then waited for an answer from the old man.

Breathing in deeply, the wrinkles on Anthony's face deepened even more. His voice was considerably muted when he spoke, "Abel had sent 5000 Warriors to keep things under control in the northern town of Garrason, the source of the outbreak as you all probably know by now. The situation escalated, with the infected now scattered beyond the town borders. Our plan was to quarantine the infected, then attempt to look for a cure using samples collected from them, but Abel had deemed them unclean and had all the infected eliminated on the spot. There are at least 30,000 people in Garrason Town, and while almost half of them had shown symptoms of the disease, the rest of them were still sane, and Abel had them all wiped out. He even set fire to the town and razed everything to the ground. In the end, no more than 800 people had survived the madness of this butcher!"

When he finished speaking, Herrera asked softly, "Advisor, is the epidemic under control then?"

"Yes, for now, there seem to be no new cases of infection, which was probably the only good thing to come from this nightmare. But my blood still runs cold just thinking about what Abel did. He's completely addicted to slaughter, and I don't think I'll ever forget the bloodlust in his eyes. Did you know? He not only ordered his men to conduct the extermination of the infection, he too had joined in the act himself. I saw with my own eyes how he cleaved a crying girl in two with his sword. There were also many other Magicians who had participated in this monstrous act. At that moment, I thought they had all turned into demons!"

Anthony was nearing 70 years old, and both Link and Herrera took great pride in being his juniors. The old man had bottled up all this frustration in himself, and once an outlet presented itself, he just could not stop himself from venting it out.

From his account, Link understood the present state of Garrason Town.

Garrason Town was 100 miles north of Orida Fortress, and so it naturally fell within Duke Abel's jurisdiction to deal with the outbreak there in whatever way he deemed fit.

Throughout all this, Duke Abel had fulfilled only his duties, but his actions had been way too excessive. Though Anthony did not agree with such radical measures, some of the other Magicians who had joined in the slaughter alongside the duke viewed the whole affair as a necessary evil to cleanse the region of the disease.

The fact there were Magicians who saw nothing wrong with what Duke Abel ordered them to do had sent a chill down Anthony's spine.

After listening to all this, Link and Herrera could not help but shiver at the thought of Duke Abel's ruthlessness and the delight he apparently took in indiscriminate manslaughter, despite the fact that his actions might have yielded results. Still, as both of them had not been on the scene, they couldn't judge the duke solely based on Anthony's account of the whole thing.

Herrera could only console the old man at this point. "It's all in the past now, advisor. Everything will be alright."

Anthony let out a long sigh and held his head in despair. "To have my people, never once fallen to the Dark Army, fall instead under the butcher knife of my own kin... oh, the shame!"

Seeing their own advisor in complete shambles, Herrera shot a glance at Link, hinting at him to come up with something.

Link began to speak when Anthony suddenly raised his head and looked straight at him. "Link, Abel's growing more insane by the minute. What's worse is that he's doing all this in the name of justice and under the guise of exterminating demons."

Link knew what Anthony had meant. He wanted Link to intervene in this. Making eye contact with the wizened dean, Link spoke, "How about this, I'll go to the North for a bit and see what's wrong with Duke Abel."

Though Anthony had spoken disapprovingly of the duke, he did stop the spread of the disease, and his actions were still in line with army regulations.

The army was not exactly filled with doctors to begin with; they simply did what they

did best—brutally murder everyone on sight in an attempt to nip the outbreak in the bud. What Abel did was cruel beyond belief, but from his standpoint, he may not consider his actions to be out of line.

Still, Anthony was now the second person to come to Link with grievances against Duke Abel, with Skinorse being the first, and both were equally intelligent people. This was enough to warrant Link's intervention; he should probably go to the North to check on things.

"You should go in quietly without letting him know, or else you won't see anything there. Duke Abel's a cunning fellow, he'll know what's going on. I'm old and not worthy of his attention, which is why he doesn't bother hiding his evil deeds from me. However, he'll sweep everything under the rug immediately if he knows that you're going there for a visit."

Link nodded. "I'll go there and take a look at things myself."

Anthony was satisfied with his response. He then asked, "I know you're busy lately, and you won't go there without any reason. Is there anything the academy can help you with?"

Link looked at Herrera, who then gave Anthony the books that he had brought with him. "These are the enchantment books Link has written. Take a look."

Anthony flipped through the books for around ten minutes then slammed a hand on the table. "A great read indeed!"

He then sighed. "Pity you wrote only two books. Are there more?"

Herrera answered on behalf of Link, "Link still hasn't written out the rest. Though, Link plans on establishing an enchantment workshop of his own to compete with the High Elves in the magical equipment business. To accomplish this, he'll be recruiting a number of talented magical enchanters."

Before Herrera even finished, Anthony clapped his hands together and shouted, "Then do it! Those High Elves have practically monopolized the whole magical equipment business. They've been making a profit out of our pockets for years, to the point of almost drying us out of our finances... You just go ahead and pick the best of the bunch. But make sure none of them are mistreated, or you'll answer to me personally."

Link smiled. "That wouldn't happen."

Link had planned on making this a long-term affair. Possessing unfathomable secrets of the craft, the High Elves were capable of producing quality magical equipment that had won the hearts of everyone from every other race. Instead of going for a huge bite out of the High Elves' business, Link had planned on just taking a few nibbles here and there at first.

Later on, some of the people there began discussing a few other details of the collaboration with Link. The discussion went on for a few hours, and in that time, Anthony had lightened up somewhat.

Link and Herrera then stayed at the Mage Tower for dinner, all three of them exchanging interesting anecdotes with each other.

Nearing 70 years old, the old man's body had shriveled up considerably. With most of his time spent alone without wife or children, he was more than thrilled to be visited by his two former disciples. At the end of the dinner, Anthony was blissfully drunk.

After settling the old man who had now begun spouting gibberish in his bed, Link then escorted Herrera out of the Heaven's Thorn.

The sky outside had turned dark. With a few street lamps lighting the way, both Magicians walked side by side till they reached the entrance to Herrera's Mage Tower.

"Advisor, I'll leave Rylai in your capable hands."

Herrera smiled at him. "Oh, don't worry about her, I'm sure she'll become a great Magician."

"I won't be going in then. Give this book to her, make sure she reads it. Also, tell the dean I'll be heading off to the North soon."

"Alright, be careful when you get there, I don't think Duke Abel's right in the head as well."

"I understand."

Link then turned to leave, and Herrera stood at the entrance of her Mage Tower to see him off until he finally vanished from sight. She then let out a soft sigh. The young man

who had once consulted enthusiastically with her on magical problems in the academy had now become a lord of the land. The days of him being cooped up in her Mage Tower were long since gone.

Looking at the empty patch of land in front of the Mage Tower, Herrera suddenly recalled the night Link and Eliard fought each other till they were all black and blue.

She remembered every detail of the event as if it had only happened yesterday. She could not help but smile at the memory.

In the distance, Link had left the academy far behind him and found the airship in the woods. At top speed, the airship flew Link back to Ferde. It was only a few minutes before seven in the evening when Link finally reached Ferde. The Scorched City was bustling with activity as always.

When he entered the great hall on the first floor of his Mage Tower, Link found himself face to face with a familiar figure, that which belonged to the High Elf named Bryant.

Link was a bit taken aback by his appearance, but he knew then why Bryant had shown up.

Bryant had smugly seated himself in the great hall, surrounded by Link's magical apprentices who were too afraid to come close to him. Celine, Red Dragon Elder Pettalong, Felina, Vance, Jacker, and the other powerhouses were all glaring fiercely at the High Elf.

Upon seeing Link's arrival, Bryant stood up, and a smile spread across his face. "The lord of Ferde, you sure are a busy man."

Despite the smile on his face, his eyes indicated no good will, and Link knew in an instant that the High Elf had not come with good intentions.

Chapter 465

Give You a Gold Coin for Compensation

Mage Tower

Bryant's arrival was unexpected but also made sense. It would have been stranger if the High Elves had no reaction to Link stealing the island.

After a pause, Link smiled. "The weather's nice today, with the night wind bringing the fragrance of flowers. How about we walk down the street?"

Bryant shook his head. "The mortals on the street are like ants. It's boring. How about we go to the rooftop of your Mage Tower? Just the two of us?"

"Sure." Link nodded and signaled with eyes for everyone to stop worrying. He reached his arm out in invitation. "After you."

Bryant stood up and started up the spiral staircase around the wall of the Mage Tower. Link followed him. He didn't look guarded; he seemed prepared.

At a turn on the first level, Bryant stood saw Eliard at the corner. He glanced at him, did a double-take, and his eyes lit up. He shook his head and sighed. "What talent. It's a pity he's staying with the humans."

With that, he continued climbing up.

After he climbed a few steps, Eliard suddenly said, "Bryant, Link told me about you, so I know you. I know people like you. I look down on you even more, traitor!"

Bryant paused, his power pulsing. Link stepped forward and placed a hand on his shoulder. Smiling, Link said, "Do you lose your temper so quickly with juniors too?"

"Hmph!" Bryant retracted his power and continued walking to the top of the Mage Tower.

The two soon reached the top level.

They were about 300 feet high above ground, and the surroundings were all flatlands. From the top, they could see dazzling lights from the thousands of houses in Scorched City. They were like a sea of stars. The view looking down at them was like a god looking down at all life.

"You did a good job building up this city in two years," Bryant nodded with satisfaction.

Link shook his head. "You have no right to comment on my matters. I'll pretend I didn't hear that phrase, but I won't allow it in the future."

"You... Fine, it's good for a youngster to have attitude." Bryant glanced at Link and smiled. "I thought you would die in the Dragon Valley, but I didn't expect you'd be so lucky. Not only did you survive, you even started stealing things in the sea."

Link moved his hand slightly. Light flashed and a chair floated up. He took a seat while saying, "I don't know what you're saying. Honestly, I don't understand why you're here. We don't have anything to discuss, right?"

Bryant wanted to pull over a chair like Link, but he tried and failed. He knew Link had messed with something to stop him, so he could only stand.

He turned to stare at the dark sea in the distance. Suddenly, he said, "Scorched City is a great place. It's so close to the sea and a deep water port. The bad thing about living by the sea, though, is that if there's a storm or hurricane, nothing will be left."

That was a potential threat.

Link leaned back in his seat and rested his chin on a finger. Grinning, he said, "Yes. Just like the Isle of Dawn, we all depend on the sea."

The Isle of Dawn was an island. Both of their territories had similar geographical characteristics. There was no point in threatening each other.

Bryant chuckled and looked at Link with disdain. "Our race has governed the Isle of Dawn for millennia. We've experienced countless storms. We're not worried."

The High Elves were proudly isolated. They'd fortified the Isle of Dawn long ago until it was as sturdy as an iron drum. Link's threat wasn't very realistic.

That was the truth, and Link couldn't refute it. However, he changed the topic and

smiled. "Everything about the Isle of Dawn is great, except it's too isolated. It's surrounded by water and doesn't have many mines. You don't have anything and need to be supplied by the mainland. If a storm hit and all the merchant ships were blown off course, what would you do?"

He couldn't take care of the Isle of Dawn, but he could stop the ships. That was one disadvantage of sea transportation. Once targeted by someone, there was nowhere to hide. As long as Link put all his effort into fighting the High Elves, he could destroy the entire trade system by himself!

Bryant swallowed his words at this. He stared at Link for a long while before saying, "You're only one person. We have tens of thousands of high-level Magicians in our military."

Since they were at this point, he didn't use euphemisms anymore and spoke straightforwardly. Link was unmoved. He was clear on the High Elves' situation.

In the game, he'd entered the Isle of Dawn and was familiar with the general geography, many details of the palace architecture, the extraordinary Magicians, and more.

By now, Bryant was sure Link had stolen the gyromagnetic iron ore, but Link would never admit it. More importantly, since Bryant had come personally to talk, it meant the High Elves didn't want to fight him now. Maybe they were scared or just didn't want to ruin the relationship more.

This gave Link some leeway.

"Bryant," he said. "You probably didn't come here just to argue with me. Otherwise, that would be useless."

Bryant finally gave his terms. He pointed at where Link had hid the gyromagnetic iron and said, "My race wants half of that!"

"What if I say no?" Link asked in reply.

Bryant wasn't surprised at this, but he was sure he could convince Link, because he had a hidden card!

"Then neither of us will get it. My warships are already aimed at it. If you don't agree,

we will shoot a Level-10 Dissociation Ray. All the gyromagnetic ore will evaporate."

Link thought for a moment but still shook his head. "If you do, you'll die. I'll destroy those Silver Storm Sparrows. From today, my dragon Warriors and I will block all merchants going from the Isle of Dawn to Firuman. No ship will pass!"

He said all this in a calm tone as if he was just stating facts. At the same time, a black seal appeared in his hands.

When Bryant saw it, he flinched, finally losing his cool. "The Dragon Duke Seal, it's black, the Red Dragon Queen, how... how?! That old hag... You're only twenty-one!"

The black Dragon Duke Seal was special. Bryant was very smart and had read many books. He was familiar with all of these secrets.

Before seeing this seal, Bryant was confident in his trip. But now, Link unexpectedly had the dragons' support... The High Elves weren't afraid of dragons or Ferde, but when they were allied, they were more than a match for the Isle of Dawn.

Link didn't speak. He stayed silent, waiting for Bryant to sort through his thoughts.

After a long while, Bryant finally recovered. He still wasn't willing. Staring closely at Link, he said, "Are you really going to turn my race into your enemies? Think carefully. This will be an extremely difficult road. Three hundred years ago, I tried it too, but reality told me it was impossible."

Link didn't reply. He stood up and retreated, taking out the Dragon King's Fury sword. He didn't use any power but pretended to stab Bryant three times.

It was strange. Link's sword didn't contain any power, and his movements were laughably slow. He was stabbing seemingly unimportant areas on Bryant's limbs instead of critical organs, too. But Bryant's body shook violently with every stab.

After those three stabs, Bryant's forehead was covered in sweat. His face was as white as paper.

Clang. Link put his sword away and smiled thinly. "I'm good at casually finding someone's Achilles' heel, and that's true for both people and races. If you don't trust me, we can try it."

Bryant could barely stand up. "Thirty percent!" he gritted.

Link shook his head.

"Ten percent. Nothing less!"

Link still shook his head. He tossed a gold coin at Bryant. "If you really want to benefit, you can have this coin. Nothing more."

Bryant didn't want to accept it. He didn't even reach out, but somehow, he felt something cold in his hand. It was the gold coin. Link had used a spatial spell to transport the coin into his hand.

The coolness stimulated Bryant's palm, making his cheeks burn. An ineffable humiliation surged in his heart. He took out his wand, his Mana automatically surging.

Link chuckled. He just watched Bryant, waiting for him to do something.

Slowly, the Mana ripples on Bryant's body calmed down. He stared at Link, having seemingly aged many years. "Young man, you will pay for your arrogant actions!"

With that, he turned and left. His silhouette was slouched now, and the powerful aura was gone. All that remained was the thick feeling of age and lethargy.

Seeing his back, Link knew that the talks were over. He would soon welcome the High Elves' attacks.

"I heard that the High Elves have a secret force called the Black Thorn. The Assassins are all very skilled. Among them, there's a duo called the Double Shadows. They have a Legendary dagger each and high speed magic equipment. They've never failed any of their missions. Go back and tell your queen that I'd like to witness them."

Bryant flinched. He was extremely shocked. Both the Black Thorn and Double Shadows were confidential secrets of the Isle of Dawn. If Link knew, it meant he'd made sufficient preparations.

He didn't know that Link had received all this information from the game.

"Your wish will come true." Bryant sped up.

He left the Mage Tower without stopping. Once outside, he transformed into a cloud of light and flew towards the sea. After a while, he was above the gyromagnetic iron. He saw light in the mine. Many miners were digging right then with continuous dings and clings.

He impulsively wanted to throw a corrosive light ball down and turn all the damn miners into mud, but he forced the urge down.

Flying past it, he was thousands of feet into the sea. There was a ball of mist there. Passing into it, he saw the three Silver Storm Sparrows anchored there. Bryant landed on the deck of a warship.

A Magician instantly went over. It was Level-9 Magician Vonhelon. "Prophet, how was it?" he asked.

"It's over." Bryant's face was dark.

"Then... do we?" Vonhelon pointed at the mine in the distance.

"No, let's go back. The situation is beyond my expectations. When we return, I will personally report the specifics to Her Highness." With that, Bryant went straight into the cabin, leaving a confused and upset Vonhelon.

After a while, the High Elf fleet started back. Whoosh, whoosh went the crashing waves. The three ships quietly left Ferde's sea.

On the seaside, Link watched as the Silver Storm Sparrows left. He let out a relieved breath. He had actually had been worried that Bryant would lose his temper and act recklessly. Things would have become troublesome, which was why he'd run over.

Now that they'd left, the situation was much better.

Seeing the Silver Storm Sparrows fade away, Link turned to go back into the Mage Tower, but after a few steps, he suddenly felt something and looked towards the southern sea. He could feel something hiding there. It was a weird thing that seemed to follow the Silver Storm Sparrows.

Almost at the same time, a message popped up in his vision.

Activate Mission: Pursuit

Mission Content: Sneakily follow the High Elves' Silver Storm Sparrows

Mission Reward: 10 Jogu

Link was already curious. He immediately cast a minor Levitation spell and used the Spatial Distortion Force Field to push himself. He also cast an Invisibility spell and started following the Silver Storm Sparrows from thousands of feet away.

Chapter 466

An Underwater Ambush

On the flagship of the Silver Storm Sparrows

Bryant had cooped himself up in his cabin ever since he returned.

There was something wrong with him as if everything in his body had all been used up. He simply leaned motionless against the edge of the bed in his cabin.

A while later, he took out his magical notebook for a read, which he would usually do to regain his composure.

However, this time, it seemed to not work on him as before.

As he stared at his notes, the only thing that popped up in his mind was the scene back on the rooftop. He could not stop thinking about the face of the young Magician, his words, his every action.

After a long while, he exhaled. "That year when I had just reached Legendary, I exuded the same vigor as he did, but it all ended when I met Fiona..."

There was no going back at this stage. The only thing left for him to do now was to walk this path to the end, and Link would have to die and be deprived of any chance of joining the High Elves if Bryant was to do so in comfort.

Bryant closed his notebook sharply, stood up and headed for the door to take in the sea breeze on the deck.

At the same time, there was a knock on the cabin door, and a voice spoke from outside, "May I come in Prophet?"

It was Magician Vonhelon. He was a High Elf noble with pure High Elvish blood running through his veins. Even though he called Bryant "Prophet," he knew Vonhelon had never thought of him as an equal.

Of course, this was all trivial to him.

"Enter." Bryant removed the rune lock from his door.

Vonhelon entered the cabin and closed the door behind him. He then spoke with a low voice, "Prophet, I must know, what is going on right now?"

Tonight, they had retreated from Ferde without any confrontation. This was humiliation of the highest order for both the Silver Storm Sparrows and the Magician Army. The ships' crew and members of the Magician Army were all greatly aggravated by this.

Bryant did not even bother hiding the truth from him. "Link and the dragon race have formed an alliance. He is now married to the Red Dragon Queen."

This alliance with the dragon race was the only element he could not ignore. Bryant did not doubt what Link had said. Scorched City was now filled with a massive number of Red Dragon Warriors, including a Red Dragon Elder. Surprised to see this at first, he later learned that it was due to the fact that Link had been proclaimed as a duke of the dragon race.

Vonhelon was simply dumbfounded at Bryant's response. It was something no one in their wildest imaginations would have conceived, a bad joke that would elicit only a bitter laugh from anyone who heard it.

The High Elf Magician spread out his hands. "I didn't think it would turn out like this. My apologies, Prophet, for having suspected you, but this is just outrageous!"

"If I had not seen the Red Dragon Elder back in Ferde, I would not have believed it myself... Still, if Link does not wish to give up the mining island, we may have to go to war over it. And our chance of coming out victorious from that war would be slim."

"Surely you don't mean to dispatch the Black Thorn?"

"Link knows about the Black Thorn, as well as the existence of the Double Shadows. I don't know how he had all this information, but one thing I know for sure is that he is now more than prepared for any attempts on his life. The chance of success to kill him in his sleep with an assassin is also pretty small."

Vonhelon was at a loss for words and fell silent for a long moment before he finally

spoke with a troubled tone, "I guess we should leave it to the queen to decide how best to proceed from now on."

There were only two options to choose at this stage: either they admitted their defeat, or they picked up their arms and fought to their bloody deaths, and Vonhelon knew that conceding was the best option they had right now.

In the 3000 years of High Elf history, this may be the first time that the Silver Storm Sparrows had retreated without a fight.

This was truly a huge blemish on their personal record.

Depressed, Vonhelon headed back for the door and was ready to leave, when all of a sudden, a deafening boom rocked the cabin window from outside.

Through the window, Vonhelon could see that a nearby Silver Storm Sparrow ship had been split in two by a black silhouette that had risen from the depths of the ocean.

The resulting shockwave hit the side of the ship that Vonhelon and Bryant were on, violently tipping the entire ship to the other side and sending both High Elves tumbling in the cabin.

While tumbling in mid-air, there was a flash of white light from Vonhelon's body. He had cast Teleportation, and with a soft hum, his body had vanished from the cabin. There was another hum, and the High Elf reappeared a few 100 feet above the ship in the air.

Bryant's body, on the other hand, had dissolved into mist. With a whoosh, he rushed out of the broken window and into the air outside.

As the two floated in the air, they saw the same black monstrous figure from the ocean depths slamming into the Silver Storm Sparrow ship which still had not regained its balance. With a deafening crash, the sturdy warship was also smashed into pieces.

In the midst of all this, the ship's crew and Magicians on board were either dead, badly injured or had fled for their lives. Everything was in chaos, and the sea was stained red with High Elf blood.

With the second Silver Storm Sparrow ship destroyed, the black shadow headed straight for the third ship with unimaginable speed.

"Stop it!" shouted Bryant. At the same time, he began chanting out a spell, and a queer silver leaf shot out from his Legendary magic wand, Fiona, towards the black figure.

This was Bryant's ace in the hole. Like a silver bolt of lightning, the leaf slashed across the black figure in the sea.

But he had not accounted for the thing's reaction time. As soon as he cast his spell, the black figure had dodged it by sinking back to the ocean depths.

"It's trying to flee! Realm Conversion!"

There was a blinding flash of light before Bryant's eyes as the silver leaf turned translucent. It then pierced through the ocean's surface in pursuit of its prey without even slowing down, as if the seawater had for the moment ceased to exist around the leaf.

Just when it looked as if the leaf was about to reach the black figure, all of a sudden, there was another ear-splitting shockwave from the ocean's surface. The last Silver Storm Sparrow ship was demolished in an instant by another black shape that had pierced through the vessel's bottom.

In no more than five seconds, all three Silver Storm Sparrow ships were completely obliterated.

Without losing its upward momentum, the huge black shadow rose up into the air from the ocean.

At that moment, Bryant could see clearly what they were up against. It was a silver pomfret, but it was ten times the size of a normal silver pomfret. It was 30 feet long, and the compact scales across its body was a dark red color radiating with the light of magical runes.

"It's a Magical Beast! There are two of them!" Bryant roared.

Floating in the air beside him, Vonhelon pointed his magic wand at the massive fish and screamed out a spell, "Vacuum Blade!"

Vacuum Blade

Level-8 Spatial Spell

Description: Creates an absolute vacuum by removing all air in a space with Mana. The resulting vacuum is incredibly sharp and can cut through any material in existence.

(Note: A secret spatial spell of the High Elves)

A thin film of silver light streaked through the air, and in a tenth of a second, it struck the silver pomfret!

Boom! The dark scales of the monster fish emanated a faint red light. Almost immediately, the Vacuum Blade was dispersed into the air, leaving the fish's body basically unscathed. A second later, the fish fell to the water and dove back into the dark ocean depths.

Bryant witnessed all this with a look of amazement. "This is divine power! This is no ordinary Magical Beast, it's a Divine Beast!"

Only with divine power was it able to completely nullify a spatial magic attack.

Just then, his silver leaf had caught up to the magical beast that was still rapidly diving into the ocean.

With a chink, the silver pomfret's body also emanated the same dark right light to defend itself from Bryant's attack. However, the silver leaf was more than ten times stronger than Vonhelon's Vacuum Blade and was able to pierce through the fish's defenses. It struck the fish's body, leaving a wound that was half a foot deep on it.

But... the silver leaf was only able to go so far before it pulled back to regain its momentum in the water.

A wound half a foot deep was only a flesh wound on a fish of that size. With a flick of its tail, it began to accelerate once more to the surface. This time, it began gulping down the surviving crew members floating on the ocean surface.

"Help!"

"My leg, my leg!"

"Oh God, help me!"

The crew members floating on the sea were still disoriented after being hit by the

initial shockwave. At that point, except for a few Magicians who had managed to keep themselves afloat in the air, the rest of the crew members were all still floating in the water, including the commanding officer of the fleet.

In the middle of the ocean, they were all powerless in the face of these monstrous silver pomfrets capable of sinking all their ships into the sea in mere seconds.

The other fish had also returned to the surface and began its indiscriminate slaughter of the remaining elves.

The seawater was instantly dyed red with the blood of their prey.

More than 30 High Elf Magicians floating in the air began casting their spells frantically at the silver pomfrets, but their assault was completely ineffective against them.

Out of all the High Elves in the fleet, only Bryant had managed to deal any damage to the fish, but even with his strongest spell, he was only able to leave a small wound on the fish's body.

The faces of the Magicians in the air had all gone pale. They hurled their spells down at the fish in desperation, but their efforts were all futile. They could only watch on helplessly as their kin were horribly swallowed alive by the monster fish.

The number of High Elf crew members was drastically reduced in an instant.

"Prophet, what should we do now?" Vonhelon shouted. He was now at his wit's end.

"We can only run at this point. I sense that this is only the beginning of an ambush. It's too dangerous to stay here now!" Saying this, Bryant began flying straight for the continent.

He shouted back at the other Magicians, "Everybody, head for the continent, hurry! Hurry!"

They had not left the continent too far behind, which made it the only possible place to run to. If they were to head out any further into the ocean, they would surely be killed.

Watching the two monstrous fish on the ocean surface and their surviving compatriots still shouting for help from below, the other Magicians hesitated for a few seconds,

then bit their lips and gave up all attempts to rescue them.

Looking away from the floundering crew members, one by one they flew behind Bryant and fled for the continent.

Just as they had flown for a couple 100 feet, a voice rumbled from the ocean surface. "Why are you all leaving, Magicians? You've only just got here."

The voice was echoing off from every direction. There was no way to determine which direction it was coming from. It was as if the entire ocean below them was speaking to them.

Now that was a terrifying thought.

Even Bryant was stunned for a moment, and he then roared out, "Link, I know it's you. If you want to kill me, just do it out in the open. Spare me the cowardice of an ambush!"

"Hahaha, Bryant, you really are funny. As a reward for your folly, I'll kill you last."

Vonhelon's eyes widened as he looked about, desperately searching for the enemy, but only darkness greeted him. He roared again, "Who are you? Are you not Link?"

"Who I am matters not, what matters now is that all of you should die right here, right now!"

Suddenly a beam of dark red light shot out from the ocean. Unable to react quickly enough, one of the Magicians was pierced by the beam of light. Looking down, he saw that there was a gaping hole the size of a fist in his chest before he fell, wide-eyed, from the sky.

Bryant instantly lost all will to fight back upon seeing this. "This is divine magic! We can't fight this, run now!"

Strictly speaking, all divine magic was beyond Level-19, but its power was considerably diluted due to being only supplied with power from the Mortal Realm. Still, divine magic was capable of overcoming any other spells in the Mortal Realm, including Legendary spells.

The enemy had managed to keep himself hidden. Even now, Bryant still could not find out where his opponent had hidden himself, and to top it all off, he was also capable

of using divine magic. This was a fight none of them could win. Escaping was the only option.

Chapter 467

Why Did You Save Me?

On the sea

As soon as Bryant finished speaking, there were three poofs. Three dark red beams shot out from the sea, coming at him from different directions.

Each beam was extremely consolidated and as thick as an arm. At a glance, they looked like three dark red crystal thorns. Not only were they attacking Bryant, they also sealed all of his escape routes.

At that moment, Bryant felt a wild and destructive energy coming at him. It felt like he had been struck by lightning and was immobilized. He couldn't even think properly.

All that remained in his vision was boundless red light. He only had one thought: So the God of Destruction really exists.

Only a god could have energy like that.

Faced with the attack, any delay was fatal. Bryant was about to hit, but then a misty ripple suddenly erupted thirty feet in front of him. The three beams buried into the ripple almost simultaneously and slowed down.

That was when Bryant finally reacted. His body transformed into a haze with a whoosh, and he put his all into running from the path of the red beams.

Crack, crack. Behind him, it sounded like crystals were being shattered. He looked back and saw that the spatial magic had shattered. The three beams shot through the place where had just been.

So close! Bryant couldn't help but feel belated shock. He really had brushed shoulders with death.

Immediately after, he looked in another direction. There, a black-haired youth in a dark blue robe hovered in the sky. He hadn't put away his magic sword yet; the white

glow around him hadn't faded either.

It was Link. He had arrived and saved Bryant.

Why did he do that? Doesn't he know that I've always wanted to kill him? Bryant was utterly confused.

"Don't hesitate!" Link yelled. "That's the servant of the God of Destruction! We must fight together!"

As he spoke, he glanced at his vision and chose to accept the mission. It was a follow-up mission to the last one.

Reinforcement

Mission Content: Help the High Elves defeat the servants of the God of Destruction. Protect the Silver Storm Sparrows from damage.

Mission Reward: 20 Jogu

Additional Reward: The player will receive five Jogu with every Silver Storm Sparrow saved.

Link was too lazy to do something as unrewarding and difficult as protecting the Silver Storm Sparrows.

In reality, he'd already arrived when the servant of the God of Destruction had attacked the first Silver Storm Sparrow, but he'd just watched. He gave up on the additional fifteen Jogu.

When the three Silver Storm Sparrows all sank and the servants prepared to attack the surviving High Elves, Link pretended to have just arrived and saved Bryant.

Link wasn't a nice guy, and the High Elves weren't either. Bryant thought that Link had killed his granddaughter and probably wanted to take revenge.

But now, the God of Destruction's servants had appeared. Link guessed that they wanted to destroy the fleet to intensify the conflicts between Ferde and the Isle of Dawn. Link could use this chance to make the High Elves realize how powerful the God of Destruction was—to let them know there was a terrible enemy lurking in the

shadows. That way, they wouldn't keep bothering Link.

As for whether the High Elves would suffer great casualties, Link didn't care. As far as he knew, there were more than forty Silver Storm Sparrows. Losing three would just make the lesson memorable.

These thoughts were all running through Link's mind. No one knew. Judging by his actions, he had shown up to help at the most critical moment.

On the other hand, Bryant seemed to wake from his trance at Link's words. Faced with this big enemy, he had no other thoughts. He could only choose to ally with the human. "I don't know where he's hiding!" he yelled.

The most awkward thing was that he wouldn't fear these enemies if they were face to face, but they were hiding in the sea for surprise attacks. Their hiding techniques were advanced, too. He had no target at all; he was a sitting goose.

As he spoke, Link moved his force field to approach him. He took out his magic sword and pointed at the sea's surface. "I'll save the people first. Watch out for me."

Spatial Distortion: Symmetrical Gravity Force Field!

A huge force field spread out, pressing down across thousands of feet of water.

Something strange happened. Under the force field, the seawater became concave, dipping down dozens of feet. It looked like a basin in the middle of the sea. The High Elf survivors in the area felt the opposite force. They had been struggling to escape from the scary silver fish but now, they floated into the air.

From the beginning of the attack to then, only around eighty High Elves were still left. The enemy was obviously very skilled.

When they floated in the air, the fish in the sea tried to jump up to attack. However, the force field acted on them, multiplying their weight.

Plop, plop. Two fish burst from the sea but were forced back down before they could reach thirty feet above sea level. They couldn't catch up with the floating elves.

This scene was too astounding. All the High Elf Magicians, including spatial Magician Vonhelon, were all dumbfounded. They couldn't believe a Legendary Magician could

have such mind-blowing power!

"Take them away!" Link roared.

As soon as he spoke, there were small poofs from the sea. Some dark red beams shot towards him. They also contained horrible destructive intent, trying to crush Link's will.

However, he was different from Bryant.

Legendary Dragon Power coursed through his veins. He also had the Heart of the Dragon. His soul was protected by layers of Dragon Power and wasn't affected at all. This was a dragon's natural advantage. Otherwise, they wouldn't survive the chaos in the Void when they entered the Sea of Void.

Link didn't move, but he was multitasking. Poof, poof, poof. Three balls containing black vortexes appeared before him. They were Despair Balls.

However, the three destructive beams didn't hit the Despair Balls because they were stopped halfway through.

A watery shield more than fifteen feet wide shot up before Link. The watery surface crystallized, turning into a smooth mirror. The next moment, the beams hit the mirror. Poof, poof, poof. The shield melted, but the beams reflected back into the sea.

Bryant had acted.

At the same time, the other Magicians, led by Vonhelon, reacted too. They started to help the survivors Link had pulled into the air.

There were more than thirty Magicians and they were all above Level-7. Vonhelon was at Level-9. Helping the survivors was an easy task. They quickly grabbed them all and started retreating.

Link deactivated the large scale force field. During this process, his eyes remained on the sea. He had the Vision of Truth; this was his greatest advantage. The enemy couldn't hide when he had this vision.

The sea didn't exist in his eyes. He had confirmed the enemies' locations during the last attack. Under the Vision of Truth, he saw three light spots hiding in the water. They

looked like Agatha Nagas.

"I see them," he called to Bryant. "They're 300 feet deep. I'll point them out and you attack!"

Bryant shook his wand. The silver leaf flew out and floated beside him, waiting for Link to point out the targets.

Link focused his gaze and pointed the Dragon King's Fury sword in the air. "Despair!"

Poof. A Despair Ball appeared before Bryant. He'd seen this spell before. After a moment of hesitation, he shot the leaf into the ball.

At the same time, another Despair Ball opened up beside a Naga. The silver leaf shot out and buried into the Naga.

The Naga had a sturdy divine shield. When the silver leaf collided with it, there was a bright flash. After a tenth of a second, the leaf dimmed and returned to Bryant. The Naga's shield had thinned too. Only one more hit was needed.

"Despair!"

Another Despair Ball appeared before Link. He stabbed his sword in. Poof! The sword tip was behind the Naga. It easily broke through the thin shield and stabbed into the Naga's head.

"One down, two to go. Again!"

Link tossed another Despair Ball to Bryant. This time, Bryant didn't hesitate at all. He shot his silver leaf in, his intensity at least ten percent stronger than before.

Boom!

The leaf fought with the divine shield again. Waves tossed, and the shield was destroyed. The Naga was hit by the leaf, too. She didn't die, but she became dazed. Link stabbed again and easily took care of her.

Two of the three were killed almost instantly. The third felt something amiss and fervently swam deeper. At the same time, two large silver fish swam towards her to protect her.

"One more. She's about to escape. I'll force her out and you get ready!" Link called.

Poof! A Despair Ball appeared. It was more than thirty feet wide and used up more than 2,000 Dragon Power points. At the same time, another six-foot-wide Void Destructor fireball appeared on his other hand. He waited instead of rushing the attack.

When the Naga and two fish grouped together, he tossed the Void Destructor into the Despair Ball.

Boom! Bryant saw a huge flash under the water. The entire sea turned crystal red. After that, the sea started swelling up from the fireball's force and became bloated.

In Link's Vision of Truth, he saw that the three guys had the daylights blasted out of them. The two fish and Naga started floating up. The divine shields were mostly gone, too.

"Now!" Link yelled.

This time, Bryant saw the enemies. They were semi-conscious; it was the best time for an attack.

His silver leaf pierced the sea surface. It shot through the Naga and then towards one silver fish. It buried into one of the fish's eyes and out the other, then it went towards the second one, hitting its head in the same way.

Whoosh. The leaf came back out, returning to Bryant's wand.

The servants of the God of Destruction had all been killed. The sea returned to silence.

Link looked to Bryant and smiled thinly. "Do you feel the power of the God of Destruction now? He's been watching us from the darkness, trying to make us fight. That day at the lighthouse, your daughter used similar power to kill me. After she failed, she suffered from the backlash of the power."

Bryant looked to the ruins of the fight in silence. After some time, he asked, "Why did you save me?"

He could tell that Link could easily kill them all. The other High Elves were still alive and could attest to his innocence. He hadn't had to save Bryant at all.

If Bryant had been in this situation, he would have watched Link get killed without any hesitation, then come out to save the others.

Link smiled. "I want to see if the human hero from 300 years ago really lost his conscience."

With that, white light flashed, and half a second later, Link disappeared. Only Bryant remained, hovering silently above the sea.

After a while, Vonhelon rushed over. "Prophet, are we safe?" he asked.

"Yes. The servants are all dead. Those are the corpses." Bryant pointed at the Nagas floating on the surface. "Take them back so we can study them."

"Our ship is gone. Where do we go?" Vonhelon asked.

"Go back to Ferde. We'll ask the lord for a ship."

"Will he try to negotiate?"

Bryant frowned slightly. The High Elf's words suddenly felt jarring to his ears.

In the current situation, the Ferde lord was no longer their enemy. They had a mutual enemy—the God of Destruction. Since Link had saved them, why would he pull tricks for something as small as a ship? And even if he did, so what? He had just saved them. They had to repay the act anyhow.

"So what?" he retorted. "Do you have any other ideas?"

"I understand." Vonhelon turned back. He grouped the survivors and flew towards the mainland.

Bryant didn't speak during the trip. No one knew what he was thinking about.

Chapter 468

The Shadow of Destruction

When Link had returned to Ferde, he immediately went to the harbor and found the commander of the navy Grayson there.

"There will be a couple of High Elves coming in later. I want you all to prepare a three-masted merchant vessel for departure and stock it up with enough water, food, and medicine. Give the ship to them when they arrive, and just accept whatever they have to offer for it," said Link.

"Yes, my lord." Grayson found his order to be a bit odd, but as it had come from the lord of Ferde personally, he did not think too much about it and did as he was told.

Link then left the harbor. Half an hour later, a soldier reported to him that a group of High Elves had arrived at the harbor.

Back at the harbor, Grayson saw that there were at least 100 High Elves, every one of them wearing the same dark green battle robe. Most of them looked completely worn out, with some of them bearing grievous wounds on their bodies. One of the more severe ones had even broken an arm.

A white-haired High Elf stepped out from the group and said to Grayson, "You must be the commander of the navy here. We need a ship to head back to the Isle of Dawn. Of course, you'll be richly compensated for your troubles."

Saying this, the High Elf took out an exquisitely-crafted magic sword which emanated thick ripples of magical power. Grayson instantly liked what he saw.

He had already prepared the merchant vessel for the High Elves as ordered by his lord, and without any reservation accepted the sword with a smile. "You've arrived just in time. I already have a ship ready for you and your men."

He then called to one of the sailors, "Jadence, take them to their ship."

Bryant was the High Elf who had approached the commander. He was stunned upon

hearing this, not expecting things to go so smoothly that he feared he might be going into a trap again.

Looking at the mistrustful look on the High Elf's face, Grayson added, "It was an order from our lord, so don't just stand there, let's get a move on now."

"Oh, I see," said Bryant softly, visibly relieved by this.

After the bustle around the ship had died down, the High Elves were finally settled on board the ship. As the wind direction was not right, some of the High Elf Magicians set up a simple wind rune on the ship, and the merchant vessel slowly began its departure from the harbor.

In no time, they had left the harbor far behind them.

Bryant stood on the deck, silently watching the flickering lights of the harbor in the distance.

Beside him came the sound of footsteps clacking against the wooden deck. It was Vonhelon.

He reported, "Prophet, there is medicine on the ship, and our Warriors have been treated without too much trouble."

"Alright then." Bryant had mixed feelings about this. He did not expect such thoroughness from Link.

Vonhelon was also visibly troubled by this. They had come with their own warships, and now, not only were they saved by Link, but they were also riding his ship back to the Isle of Dawn. It was humiliating, to say the least.

After a while, Vonhelon, spoke, "Prophet, was that really the God of Destruction?"

"Yes. I felt his presence... He's an even more fearsome dark god than the Spider Queen Lolth. Historical records have shown that his appearances have always brought about great calamities to all of Firuman. This time... may not be an exception."

Vonhelon let out a long breath, before saying, "This is also a chance for the lord of Ferde to shine, you know."

The God of Destruction was a mutual enemy to all existence on the continent, and even the High Elves were powerless to put up any resistance against him. However, there was a chance that the God of Destruction may be vanquished by the lord of Ferde himself, and at that point, no one would be able to halt his progress forward.

Bryant felt even more ill at ease, as he recalled Link's words before he left them on the ocean. He could not help but sigh. Hero of the humans, huh? It's been such a long time; I've almost completely forgotten about it. Do I even deserve a chance to redeem myself now? Bryant thought.

He did not know the answer to that question.

...

Scorched City

At that moment, Link too felt troubled, not by the High Elves, but by the emergence of the God of Destruction.

Instead of magically transporting himself back to his Mage Tower as usual, he had hailed a horse carriage and gotten on it. Link ordered the driver to drive slowly, and he sat in the carriage in silence, ruminating on how to best deal with the onslaught of the God of Destruction.

From outside the carriage, the rhythmic clacking of horse hooves could be heard, along with the sound of wheels grinding against the soil beneath. The city lights twinkled like stars through the window throughout the whole journey from the harbor to the Scorched City.

What had happened tonight had at least alleviated the tension between him and the High Elves, which was probably the only good thing to come from it.

But now, the God of Destruction, who had all this time been lurking in the dark recesses of the world, had risen to the surface to bare its fiendish fangs and sharp claws at the world. His dark forces had appeared for the first time at the City of Lariel, and later below the lighthouse of Ferde's harbor. And tonight, a High Elf fleet had been obliterated by them on Ferde's waters.

However, this time, Link was able to see through the concealment of these dark creatures thanks to his Vision of Truth. If Link had not gotten there in time, the High

Elves would surely all be murdered by them in the sea, and there would most certainly be a war between Ferde and the Isle of Dawn.

Should such a war be allowed to happen, both sides would sustain severe damage, while the God of Destruction would continue growing in power in the darkness. He could lash out on the world at any given moment, and there would be no one to stop him at all.

This was an enemy more cunning and cruel than any Dark Elf or demon.

The atrocity that the God of Destruction's dark creatures has wrought tonight was horrific, and I fear the worst is yet to come. Where are they now? And what is their next move? thought Link.

Link realized that he knew little to nothing about the God of Destruction. This was an enemy he had no knowledge of whatsoever.

He grew even more anxious as he pondered, until finally, he called for the driver to stop.

"Sir, is something the matter?" The driver did not recognize Link, but he sensed that he must be an important person.

Link opened the door of the carriage and stepped out. He then tossed a gold coin to the driver. "Just drop me off here. It's getting late, you should head home too."

"Many thanks, good sir. You really are a good man." The driver was overjoyed at being paid such an extravagant fee.

Link walked straight towards a manor not far from where he stood, but he did not enter the manor. Instead, he went around it till he reached an empty clearing. He then found a large rock and sat on it.

He took out the rune stone given to him by the Travel Magician Aisenis and infused magical power into it. A dim white light began shining from it, and Link set the rune stone on the rock. He then patiently waited.

Around three minutes later, Link sensed a faint ripple in the space forming to his side. Seconds passed, and a small Yabba man finally materialized into view. It was the Travel Magician Aisenis.

He saw Link, and his face broke into a smile. "Ah, Magician, it's been a while. You've certainly grown much stronger than before."

Link cut straight to the point. "You once said that you're just here for the fun of it, so you must know about the God of Destruction's invasion, don't you?"

"But of course," said Aisenis, still smiling gleefully at him.

"I need information about this. Name your price."

"Well now, aren't you forthright tonight. Not that I mind, anyway." Aisenis handed Link a scroll. "I'm an honest-to-God businessman, and I like my numbers in black and white. Here's my price.

Link took the scroll and opened it. There was nothing on it at first, but then words began taking shape on the paper. Half a second later, he could finally see what was written on it.

A detailed plan of the God of Destruction's invasion (latest edition), priced at 80 Jogus.

This was a little expensive. At the moment, Link only had 103 pieces in hand. To have more than half his reserve of Jogus spent in one fell swoop was something he found difficult to swallow. He opened his mouth, ready to haggle further with the Magician.

Aisenis wagged a finger at him, knowing what he was about to say. "My price is written there. No discounts."

"Is this plan updated continually?" Link asked.

"...You really thought this through, eh? You'll have to pay more for a continually updated plan, though."

Saying this, Link saw that a new price had appeared on the scroll, stating that every new update would cost him 80 Jogus. This was way too expensive.

"Alright, I'll buy it. Just make sure that you give me the latest information on this."

The little Jabba man leaped up and shouted, "But of course, swindlery and scams are far beneath a respectable businessman such as I!"

"Then I'll take it." Link handed a pouch full of Jogus over to Aisenis.

Aisenis' watery pair of eyes flashed at the sight of the pouch. He eagerly took out a piece of Jogu and bit on it. Laughing out loud, he said, "Ah, genuine Jogu. This is simply wonderful; I can't believe I've managed to earn this much in one night."

He gave a pleasant look at Link. "Kid, you've got a bright future ahead of you, to be able to get this much Jogus in such a short time. I now officially proclaim you to be my most esteemed customer. Take good care of that scroll. If you have any problems, just ask it, and of course, if you've stocked up on enough Jogus, you can summon me any time. Your credit score right now is one star, and so you're allowed credit for as much as 10 pieces of Jogus. If you can get up to five stars, I'll even let you in on the best way to deal with spatial cracks. You can pay me later, of course.

This did not sound like a bad deal. Link nodded and waved the scroll at him. "Will all that be shown in the plan?"

"Of course, look at the scroll again. It's already written out the whole plan as promised."

Link looked through the scroll again, and sure enough, the paper was now crammed with words and diagrams detailing the invasion plans of the God of Destruction.

"Not bad." Saying this, Link felt the air rushing in to fill the sudden emptiness beside him. Aisenis had already vanished.

Not in the least bit concerned by this, he sat on the rock and began perusing the scroll intently.

Link was mesmerized by what he read from the scroll. When he finished, he drew a long breath. "No wonder Duke Abel changed so drastically."

He stood up and was about to leave for the North when suddenly he stopped.

"The scroll said that the duke had absorbed the power of every living being he killed. As of now, he has already killed 3980 people and is now a Legendary Warrior. He is also protected by Agatha Nagas from the shadows. I fear that I may not be a match to him if I were to face him alone, and with the God of Destruction still fixated on my land, Abel may be alerted immediately by my absence. I need to flush out the traitors among us!"

Link stood up and headed straight for his Mage Tower. According to the scroll, there was a cult stronghold worshipping the God of Destruction in Ferde called Grissin Altar. It had over a hundred core members, and its peripheral members numbered in the thousands.

He had to destroy the altar, and soon.

Chapter 469

Time to Repay an Old Friend

Magician Akensser was still a nice guy. He worked for the money and supplied very detailed information. He had even marked the enemy's basic power.

This helped Link make specific plans.

The Greience Altar was mainly used to spy on Ferde's intelligence. The core worker was only a Level-6 Assassin. They weren't very strong.

Link's goal was just to destroy the God of Destruction's contacts, not kill them. He didn't care if they ran away. He just didn't want them messing around in his territory. After he returned to the Mage Tower, he wrote an order to Jacker for him to make a team responsible for clearing the enemy out.

Meanwhile, he prepared to go north.

According to the scroll, Duke Abel was now at the pinnacle of Level-19. His power also had attributes of the God of Destruction. He was powerful and found many excuses each day to kill people and absorb their energy. He would kill at least fifty people a day; he was getting stronger daily.

Link had to go north!

Other than his speedily rising power, there was something else. Because of his great power and high class, he had many followers now. He was gradually becoming a candidate for Norton Kingdom's new king. After King Leon lost the Hot Springs City, he had become hopeless.

This meant that even if Link could successfully kill Abel, it would cause chaos in the Orida Fortress. As for what he should do, Link had to plan well.

Currently, his dragon form needed five more months to recover fully. His agility was a problem. Thus, he had to research a spell for traveling.

Link already had an idea for this. He had planned on using a force field's push to gain high speed. The theory was simple, but there were many details to take note of. For example, how to be agile, not leave any trace behind, raise his maximum speed, and more. These all required detailed optimization.

Time was tight, and he would be too slow by himself. He went to find Alloa and started discussing the new spell with her.

The two were both obsessed with magic. As soon as they started researching, they forgot about everything else. Time passed without them realizing.

It was better for Alloa, because she wasn't too busy and had time to do other things.

Link, though, was the lord. Other than researching spells, he had to write enchantment books and find time to advise Celine and check important documents, among other things. He didn't even have time to eat or sleep.

Celine was busy, too. She had fallen in love with enchantment magic. She had always seen how busy Link was and wished she could become powerful enough to help him.

Right now, she was practicing shooting, enchantments, and martial arts at the same time. She was so busy she was out of her mind.

On the other hand, Jacker, commander of the Ferde Army, was creating a team to clear the altar. The news wasn't a secret amongst the upper level of Ferde. The next morning, Eliard found Jacker.

Smiling, Eliard said, "I've reached a bottleneck recently. I can help."

He was now at Level-8; his magic knowledge had reached that level too. He could even do a Level-8 spell. However, he felt that improving more would be difficult. Thus, he decided to change his mindset while also helping Link.

Jacker had already decided on most of the people. Seeing Eliard, he was troubled. "The mission is dangerous. You shouldn't go."

Eliard was Link's good friend and now a Level-8 Magician. Everyone knew he had the potential to become someone great. He could possibly even become Ferde's next Legendary Magician.

How could Jacker risk losing someone so precious?

Eliard chuckled dryly. "Jacker, I'm not only a scholar. You saw my skills when we cleared the Ferde Wilderness together."

Jacker shrugged. "It's different now. Our enemies are much stronger than those small things."

"My friend," Eliard replied seriously, "That's why I need to fight more. My spells can't just be pretty fireworks... Link is only one person. He's always so busy and lost all his happiness in life. How can I not help with something so small?"

Jacker was shaken. He quickly nodded. "All right, we're leaving in the afternoon. Go get ready."

"That's better." Eliard chuckled and returned to the Mage Tower to prepare.

Influenced by Link, Eliard was also obsessed with enchantments. He'd created some magic equipment in his free time, including a wand, a Burst ring, and defensive bracelets. He was practically covered in high-level magic equipment from head to toe.

That wasn't even it. Eliard had also been working on a magic fire gun. He was mostly done now. He just needed to tie some loose ends.

He'd been inspired by Celine. She had a pair of small guns that were extremely beautiful and powerful, great for defense.

Of course, Eliard had pride. He knew that Link had made the guns for Celine. He obviously wouldn't ask Link for help. He would make them himself.

However, he'd still borrowed Celine's guns before working and studied them for a long while. This wasn't copying—it was referencing. Enchanters didn't plagiarize.

Eliard was a Magician, and magic was his main profession. He only needed one gun rather than a pair.

Returning to his small enchantment room, Eliard grabbed the half-finished gun. After an hour, he completed the final stabilizer rune. This rune helped with the reaction force of the bullet so Eliard could hold the gun more steadily.

This was his own creation. Celine's gun didn't have it.

After finishing, Eliard looked at the eight-inch-long gun. It had a dark blue luster and was covered in silver runes. He smiled.

This gun was practically identical to Celine's, but the material wasn't as high quality. It wasn't as powerful, either. It could only create Level-7 attacks, but it was good enough.

Holding the gun, Eliard thought of how Celine often twirled her gun. He thought it looked cool and tried it.

Clatter. He spun the gun once and it flew away, falling to the ground.

It hurt Eliard's heart. He quickly grabbed it and examined it closely. He didn't breathe until he was sure it was okay. My hands aren't agile enough. I'm not suitable for those cool moves.

Then he took out a bottle of black python oil. He took apart the active parts of the gun and started oiling them. He'd learned this trick from Lannie. It helped raise the reliability and durability.

While oiling, he heard a knock on the door. He opened it with his mind. "Come in."

Footsteps sounded behind him and stopped not too far from him. The person didn't speak. Finding it strange, Eliard looked back to see Link staring at the gun.

Seeing that Eliard had noticed him, Link complimented, "Nice gun. It's pretty."

"Thanks." Eliard was really satisfied with the gun. "How do you have time today?" he asked.

Link grabbed a chair and sat down. Chuckling, he asked, "Jacker said you're going on the mission?"

Eliard put his hand to his forehead and sighed. "Oh, that guy's such a tattletale. You're not going to let me?"

"Of course... not." Link let out a dramatic sigh. Seeing the expression on Eliard's handsome face change, he was in a good mood. "Magic isn't just fireworks. Many times,

you need actual fighting to have a breakthrough. I obviously won't stop you. However, the Greience Altar is for the God of Destruction. That guy likes giving his believers extremely powerful destructive spells. You have to be careful. Here, take this."

Link handed Eliard a semi-transparent runestone. "I call this a Dragon Stone. It contains highly effective healing magic. You can use it three times, and then it will recharge automatically. Use it once every three days. As long as you don't hurt your brain, you can stay alive with it, even if your body is in pieces."

Eliard grabbed the lifesaving object and chuckled. "With this, I can fight without fear."

"Yes, go without fear. Magic requires unrestrained imagination."

Link patted Eliard's shoulder in encouragement, then left. He'd only given himself five minutes for this trip and couldn't stay too long.

Watching Link leave, Eliard carefully put away the Dragon Stone. He started oiling the gun again. Eliard, keep fighting! he encouraged himself.

With Link's support, he had practically perfect conditions for learning magic. Any Magician who knew would be jealous. Now, he was a powerful Level-8 Magician. It was time to repay his old friend!

In the afternoon, a prepared Eliard left with the team. There were also two Yabba shooters, more than 100 human shooters, and more than 500 elite human Warriors. This force was enough for a tiny altar.

...

Just as the team set off, Duke Abel, who was reading documents in the Orida Fortress, welcomed a surprise guest.

Chapter 470

The Northern Duke

Orida Fortress

Duke Abel tore a piece of paper into pieces in a rage. "All sad, pathetic excuses for men. Seems like I was too soft on all of you!"

The document was a report concerning the turnout rate to a military draft he had authorized in a small town in the North. He had expected 3000 recruits from the place, but only 2000 Warriors were sent back to the fortress, which was only two-thirds of what he had demanded. Duke Abel was not at all satisfied by this.

At that moment, Abel could feel the bloodlust rising in him. His nose twitched unconsciously, and his hand reflexively moved towards the handle of his sword. There was an insatiable thirst growing in him.

He craved the smell of fresh blood. He wanted to see a blood mist spray out of a body when it was cleaved open by his sword. Most of all, he wanted to hear the sound his sword would make when piercing through the flesh of another man, as well as the anguished scream of his victims. He delighted in the murder of small children, especially little girls. Their soft bodies were like pieces of tofu; one smooth slice of the sword was all it would take to cut through their flesh, which offered little to no resistance to the blade.

No, he must not think such thoughts. Should he let himself dwell on them any longer, he feared that he might once again resume his murderous rampage outside the walls of the fortress.

His hand gripped tightly on the sword's handle, then let go of it for a couple of times. As a result of this, his palm was now slick with sweat. After around ten minutes, Duke Abel finally managed to suppress the urge in him to kill.

He let go of the sword's handle and began reading another document.

Just then, something flashed in the corner of the wall. He immediately had a hand on

his sword, and upon raising his head, saw a dark figure standing in the shadowy corner of the wall.

"Who are you?" Abel demanded.

"Who I am isn't important. What's important is that you are now in a precarious position, my dear Marshall," said the dark shadow, its voice sounding almost pleased about this.

Abel laughed out loud. "Ha, I've already attained Legendary power, it would not be a stretch to say that I am the strongest Warrior in the fortress. On top of that, I have with me more than 50,000 Warriors in the fortress. Who would dare attack me?"

The shadow breathed out a name. "The lord of Ferde, Duke Morani."

At the mention of this name, Abel's face froze up. In an instant, he had changed into a completely different man. He had enough reason to dread Link, the Legendary Magician. Not only did he possess formidable magic, but Ferde also supplied a majority of the fortress' resources. To offend Link would mean a disruption to that supply of resources, and the whole fortress would be forced to survive on its stockpiles for at most two months.

After those two months, the Warriors would all be without food, and the fortress would collapse on itself.

"Why would the lord of Ferde confront me without reason?" Abel anxiously said to himself.

The black shadow chuckled softly. It was a sharp, whistle sound, which made Abel uncomfortable. He was itching to dive at the intruder and cut him in half, but for now, he would like to hear what it had to say next. So he managed to restrain all murderous impulses in him for as long as he could.

The shadow then spoke once more, "Because of the power you've gained. You're growing stronger through the act of killing. Did you not find it strange, this craving in you for blood and murder?"

Though its voice was soft, in Abel's ear, it had sounded like a thunderclap. "Yes, what kind of power derives itself from murder anyway? Even the demons aren't capable of this. I've been feeling more and more bloodthirsty lately. If I were to go one whole day

without killing someone, I would feel ill at ease and even find it difficult to sleep at night. I even found myself going through the memory of killing a little girl just now... How is this any different from a demon?"

He had already sensed that there was something wrong with him, but he dared not go into it further. Now, as he reflected on his past actions, he could not help but work up a cold sweat.

Duke Abel had not felt the least bit horrified while indulging in his killing spree. After hearing all this said to him by someone else, though, he could not believe he was even capable of such a thing.

Who was behind the dark shadow?

"You hiding in the shadows, show yourself!" Abel drew his sword out. If the intruder chose not to reveal himself, he would not hesitate to kill him where he stood.

The figure chuckled again and stepped out of the shadows. It was a little girl dressed in a black silk dress. Her body was somewhat serpentine, and her features were exquisitely sculpted and sturdy. She looked at Abel with a sly smile.

"Ah... You're... It's you!"

Duke Abel took a step backwards. His mind was thrown into disarray. The girl looked exactly the same as the angel of light who had granted him his power. The only difference was their clothing.

"Yes, it's me. I was the one who had gifted you the power of murder. Thanks to me, you've become a Legendary Warrior. Shouldn't you be thanking me?"

"You... You're a demon!" Duke Abel realized he had been tricked.

The girl in the black dress violently waved a hand with a look of disdain on her face. "Don't lump me in with demons. Those pea-brained brutes are nothing more than my slaves. Oh, my dear Marshall, try not to be too hung up on who I am and start worrying about your current predicament. As far as I know, Link's on his way to the North, and he already knows about your little secret. If I were you, I would start thinking about how best to defend yourself against the Magician's wrath."

Abel fell back onto his chair, muttering, "It's useless, I'm no match for someone who

can extinguish 1000 demons by himself. What's the point of reaching Legendary if I can't even go up against that kind of power? I'm finished. My hands are stained with blood. There's no way he would forgive me for what I've done... I'm ruined, ruined!"

Duke Abel began cradling his head and mumbling to himself, with fear, shame and anger all mingled up in him.

The little girl laughed again. "What a coward you turned out to be. Aren't you supposed to be Duke Abel, the marshall of the northern army, with countless Warriors and Magicians who have sworn their allegiances to you? What have you to fear from Link and his entourage of no more than ten people?"

"He has the power to wipe out an entire army by himself!"

"That's because no other Warrior has ever been an equal match for him. But now, you're a Legendary Warrior like him, not to mention the fact that the Warriors in the fortress are all ordinary men. Do you really think he would risk using any area-of-effect spells on them? No, he won't. These Warriors will serve as nothing more than a human meat shield against the Magician. Do you understand?"

Stunned momentarily by those words, Duke Abel's rage finally overcame the fear and shame in him. "That's right, I'm the marshall here. Link has no right whatsoever to judge me. He's just the whelp of a viscount. No, I won't succumb. I'll fight. I must... I must end him!"

The bloodlust that Duke Abel had been suppressing in him all this time finally erupted, with a faint red aura radiating off his body. There was now a blood-red gleam in his eyes.

"Yes, that's it," cooed the girl in the black dress softly. "There's a small town called Gladstone 100 miles north from here where the rage epidemic had once again reared its head. You should take your men there to keep things under control. There are around 10,000 people living there, by the way."

Abel felt a sudden chill in his blood at those words. He roared at her, "Leave me!"

"As you wish, I've already said what I needed to say. Whatever you do next is entirely up to you." The girl in the black dress retreated back to the corner of the wall and vanished into the shadows.

Duke Abel sensed that something was off. The guards outside should have rushed in immediately to check on him as soon as he started screaming and shouting in the room. However, nothing happened when the girl had vanished without a trace from the place.

Duke Abel slumped back in his chair, not at all bothered to check with the guards outside. His bloodshot eyes stared absently at the ceiling of his study, as the words of the girl in the black dress echoed still in his head.

Gladstone, the rage epidemic, the murderous demon, Link's judgment... These words swirled persistently in his head like a curse hanging over him.

After a long while, Duke Abel finally shouted, "Guards! Guards!"

The door to his study opened, and a young Warrior entered with a look of reverence as he gazed at the duke before him. "Marshall, how can I be of service?"

"Go, bring my daughter Annie to me!"

"Yes, Marshall." The young Warrior then stepped back out of the room.

Abel took out a pen and paper and began writing a letter. As he scribbled on, his words became even more muddled up. Once or twice, he stopped writing altogether and stared at the paper as if he could not decide whether to tear it up or not.

In the end, he could not bring himself to do such a thing.

A few minutes later, he finally finished the letter and inserted it into an envelope. He then sealed it up with his coat of arms, and at that moment, the door opened once more. Annie, who was wearing green-black leather armor, entered the room, her face cold and indifferent. When she saw her father, she spoke coldly, "What are your orders, Marshall?"

"Take this letter to the North and give it to Master Link. He is now on his way here. Take Kanorse with you, too."

"Yes, Marshall." Annie took the letter from him and then asked, "Anything else, Marshall?"

Duke Abel knew why his daughter had been acting so distant towards him. She had

objected to his genocidal campaign against the common folk back in Garrason, but he did not heed her words.

"That's it. You can go now. The sooner you leave, the better! Remember, do not give this letter to anyone else, even if they claim to be doing it under my name. Understand?"

"Understood." This provoked a strange look from Annie, but she went off to carry out her orders nonetheless.

After a while, Duke Abel heard the sound of hooves outside. He quickly looked out of the window and saw that Annie and Kanorse had left Orida Fortress on their horses.

Like a trapped beast, he paced the room for half an hour, thinking of what to do next. Suddenly he shouted, "Guards! Guards, come quick!"

The guards outside rushed into the room. "Marshall, is there something wrong?"

"Princess Annie and Kanorse have betrayed me. Contact M13 immediately! Have the commander there send someone to apprehend them! Quick, time is of the essence, under no circumstances are they allowed to escape our grasp!" Duke Abel roared.

"Yes, I understand." The soldier hurriedly went out of the room to carry out the marshall's order.

Chapter 471

Are We at a Dead End Already?

Crack, crack, whoosh, whoosh.

In the mountainous forest, one man and one woman flew by, one after another.

It was Kanorse and Annie who had just left the fortress. They'd already run more than ten miles and were panting for breath, but they didn't dare slow down.

"Hurry, Annie. They're catching up!" Kanorse urged from the front. He was a Level-9 Warrior and was much stronger than Annie, a Level-7 Assassin. He was in better shape.

However, he was totally out of breath too. When they faced those scouts from the MI3 earlier, he'd blocked almost all of the arrows. At the last moment, he even activated Battle Aura to escape with Annie. This used up a lot of his energy.

Annie didn't speak. She maintained her breathing pattern and sped up slightly.

She was in bad shape. Her leather armor had split open, revealing many injuries. The deepest wound was at her waist. She'd been sliced by a dagger, and the blade had dug in half a centimeter. Every step sent pain flaring up her side.

After sprinting for half an hour, they burst free from the forest and returned to the main road. There were no soldiers here. They began sprinting again.

Tut-tut, tut-tut. Clattering of hooves sounded before them. Shaken, the two hid behind a tree and listened closely.

They heard voices.

"It's so tragic. The epidemic appeared in Gladstone too."

"They're done. The Bloody Butcher is coming for a massacre again."

"Ah, the world is becoming messier and messier. How are we supposed to live?"

"Let's not care about all that. We'll go south after getting our reward. I heard that Ferde is good right now. There's a Legendary Magician protecting the place too. I bet it's safe."

"That's right."

The voices got closer. "They're mercenaries for hunting demons," Kanorse whispered. "Two of them. Judging from the sounds, their horses are good. Rest here, and I'll go steal their horses."

Annie nodded. She really couldn't keep running. It would be better with a horse.

Kanorse ran out. After a while, Annie heard some muffled sounds and then a whistle. She walked out and saw Kanorse leading two horses over. Not too far from him, the two bruised mercenaries rolled on the ground in pain.

"Get on," Kanorse called. He gave Annie a black horse that was more muscular of the two.

They mounted the horses. When they passed the mercenaries, Annie tossed down some gold coins. "Don't go north. It's not safe. Take the money and hurry to the South!"

The two mercenaries had thought that they had the worst luck and were about to cry. Seeing the money, their bruised eyes brightened. They immediately flipped over and fought for the coins.

After that, Kanorse and Annie urged their horses forward and galloped southward on the road. They only slowed down after half an hour when the horses were tired and changed to a trot.

By now, the strong tonic Annie had drunk earlier went into effect. Her side wound had closed and was both numb and itchy. It didn't hurt anymore.

"Why would the general try to catch us?" Kanorse asked the question that had been bothering him.

Annie was drinking water. Hearing this, she answered coldly, "He went mad... I can feel that it's not my father inside that shell. It's a demon!"

"Your Highness, are you sure?" Kanorse was in disbelief. He thought Annie was just saying things out of anger.

Annie sighed. "It's what I suspect. Earlier, he gave me a letter to send to the South. He specifically said that even if he sends someone to take it back, I should ignore it. He seemed conflicted when he said that as if there was another soul inside him."

Kanorse was terrified at this. The venom of the Dark Serpent had invaded him before so he could relate to this feeling. At that time, there was another consciousness fighting for control of his body. When he lost control, it would be like he was asleep. He wouldn't know what he did at all.

But when he had been controlled, he emitted strong dark energy. The general didn't. The priest in the fortress said he was very normal.

So what was going on? Kanorse didn't understand.

The two were quiet after that. They both had heavy thoughts.

After around half an hour, they reached a boulevard with trees on both sides. Here, Kanorse's ears suddenly twitched. He pulled the reins immediately. "Stop."

"What's wrong?" Annie already had a crossbow in her hands. She looked cautious.

Kanorse also grabbed his lightning magic sword. "This road isn't normal," he whispered. "I think I hear something odd."

The two looked around cautiously.

Cuckoo, cuckoo. A bird sang loudly in the forest, and a few birds flew into the sky.

Scritch, scratch. A few squirrels jumped around on branches and fought with each other. They looked normal.

After a while, Annie shook her head slightly. She didn't find anything wrong.

Kanorse also looked unsure. He really had felt something weird, but he couldn't pinpoint it. Giving up, he kept up his guard while saying, "Maybe I heard wrongly. Let's go."

Annie grasped her automatic crossbow too. This crossbow was custom-made and very powerful. Link had personally modified it for her too. It had Level-8 strength. She kept looking left and right, fully alert.

After a few hundred feet, nearly solid, white fog suddenly appeared before them. It was evening now, and the temperature was dropping. It was quite normal for fog to appear in a northern forest. However, they were being chased, and the fog would obstruct their vision. It was quite scary to walk in like this.

"What do we do?" Annie asked.

As soon as she spoke, there were short consecutive sounds. She could see something moving around in the trees.

Annie was on high alert. Hearing the noises, she raised her crossbow and pressed the trigger. Bang, bang, bang. Arrows shot forward.

Argh! There was a sharp cry, and a wild boar ran out. Its stomach had a gaping hole, but it was still alive and ran away crazily.

Seeing this, Kanorse sighed in relief. "Oh, it's just a wild boar... careful!"

He saw a black shadow suddenly appear behind Annie's horse. They'd found a great location—it was Annie's blind spot!

Seeing that the man was about to attack, Kanorse unsheathed his sword with a clang. Power surged into it, and there was a loud crack. A bolt of lightning struck towards the shadow.

He was now at Level-9 and could instantaneously cast Level-9 lightning attacks. As long as the opponent was below Level-9, they would all be defeated with one bolt of lightning.

But this shadow wasn't!

Dark red light glowed around him. When the lightning struck, the white light enveloped him like a silver web. It looked beautiful but was stopped outside the red glow. The man wasn't hurt or obstructed at all.

However, Kanorse's attack reminded Annie. She didn't know where the enemy was, so

she didn't attack. Instead, she activated an Assassin's Battle Technique: Instant Step.

Gray mist flashed around her, and she teleported 30 feet, appearing behind a big tree. Then she reached out and located the enemy according to sound. She shot arrows continuously at the black shadow.

The enemy's red glow was highly effective against pure magic attacks, such as lightning, flames, and wind knives. However, it was nothing against solid attacks like these arrows. These attacks could only be defended with battle armor or specific spells. He didn't have any of these.

Faced with the powerful arrows, the black shadow dodged quickly. This was the best time for an attack.

Kanorse jumped down from his horse and pounced towards the shadow. But when he was in mid-air, he heard the triggers of a crossbow and whistles in his ear.

"Another Assassin!" Shocked, Kanorse waved his lightning sword, blocking the arrows. He blocked nine in one second and landed on the ground.

Once he landed, he charged towards the shadow that attacked Annie. At the same time, he yelled, "Your Highness, be careful! There are two of them!"

Behind the tree, Annie had already emptied a quiver. She took out a new one and reached out, shooting towards the other shooter without hesitation.

Kanorse was dealing with the black shadow. Annie was sure that, if one-on-one, Kanorse could definitely defeat him. She just had to create this situation for him—if only for one second.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. Arrows flew through the forest and then Annie heard crisp clangs. The enemy had blocked her arrows. Judging from the sounds, they did so easily.

So powerful and fast! Annie was shocked at this. Her arrows were Level-8 and could pass through Level-8 material. If the enemy was so casual, they must be at Level-9.

The shadow had blocked Kanorse's lightning bolt earlier. He must be at Level-9 too.

These two Level-9 fighters had popped up out of nowhere and even had automatic crossbows that were solely for the army. Who were they? Where they her father's

lackeys?

These thoughts flashed past her mind. At the same time, she emptied another quiver and pulled back to refill it. Then she heard Kanorse yell, "Your Highness, move!"

What accompanied his voice was a wild whistling sound. Annie knew immediately that it was a Level-9 attack!

In danger, she activated the Instant Step again, jumping away from the tree. Almost at the same time, the tree she had hidden behind was shot through with a glowing red spear.

The spear was extremely powerful. It didn't hit Annie, but while passing through the tree, the air current and wooden shards crashed into Annie. Her body shook in the air as if something dug into her back. She lost balance and crashed onto the ground.

Boom! She fell around 60 feet away into some bushes. Then she got up to hide behind another tree. As soon as she got up, her legs lost power, and she lost control, falling to the ground.

Now, she felt extreme pain from her back. She reached behind and discovered her armor had been ripped apart. It was warm and wet, covered in blood. She seemed to feel some bloody holes too.

Then she realized she couldn't move at all. Her entire body seemed to be broken.

"Your Highness!" Kanorse exclaimed. He grabbed his sword and fought with all his might. One second later, he was stabbed in the side, but he beheaded the enemy.

Yanking out the spear in his waist, he threw it towards the other Assassin without thinking. Without looking at the result, he sprinted into the forest and grabbed the heavily wounded Princess Annie. He activated the Battle Aura and ran into the dense forest.

He could feel blood flowing down his waist and his energy disappearing. Princess Annie's breathing was weakening too. After a while, he heard noises behind him. The Assassin had caught up.

They seemed to have come to a dead end.

Chapter 472

Trouble Ahead

The Assassin was getting closer behind them. Six hundred feet, 500 feet, 400 feet—the distance between them began to shrink.

He had taken severe damage to his abdomen from the enemy, who was also a Level-9 Warrior like him. Only death awaited both him and Princess Annie if he were to go up against such an adversary head-on.

He ran through the woods, looking left and right frantically for a safe place to hide themselves.

Huge globs of fresh blood flowed out from the open wound and splattered on the ground. Kanorse felt himself growing weaker by the minute. Suddenly, he heard Annie's weak voice from his arms.

"Kanorse, leave me... I... can't go on. Take... the letter, go north, give it to Link."

Annie's hand was dripping with fresh blood, which had also stained the letter itself. Her face was deathly pale at this point, and her eyes were noticeably dilated. Kanorse began to panic at the sight of this.

"Hold on, Your Highness! Hold on!" Kanorse gnashed his teeth and exerted the last of his strength to widen the distance even more between themselves and the Assassin.

He was a Warrior, and he would be damned if he were to let Princess Annie die here with him!

But as determined as he was, there was no point in resisting the inevitable.

Kanorse's burst of speed did not last long. Three minutes later, exhaustion finally caught up to him. Due to the intense exertion, the wound on his waist had opened up even more. Half of his body had gone numb, and both his legs had turned to lead. At this point, it was like wading through knee-deep mud.

In his arms, Princess Annie had gone silent. She seemed to have passed out, though she clutched tightly still Link's letter, which was now crumpled into a ball and soaked in her blood.

There was still nothing but the forest in front of them, which began to grow denser as he ventured deeper into it. His senses sluggish, he had lost all sense of direction and now ran in whatever direction the path in front of him took.

Before long, his vision began to blur. He laughed somewhat bitterly to himself, "Is this it for me?"

A few seconds later, something incredible happened.

Kanorse saw his body running on ahead of him. Like an observer from the outside, he was now looking on as his own body bolted straight on without him.

This was too unreal.

He looked down at himself, and saw that his limbs had become transparent, along with Princess Annie. It was like holding air in his arms.

Kanorse stopped running. "Am I a spirit? Am I dead now?"

As he stopped to wonder at his current state, a voice called to him from behind a tree, "Don't just stand there, come over here!"

Kanorse turned to wherever the voice came from, but could not see anything. He realized then that this must be the act of a Magician.

He walked over to the tree, and saw to his surprise three people squatting behind it.

He instantly recognized Skinorse among them. The other two were a young woman with wavy hair and a middle-aged man wearing a grey wide-brimmed hat. Judging from his appearance, Kanorse reckoned that the latter must be a Magician.

He opened his mouth to speak, but then Skinorse pressed a finger on his lips. "Shh, not a word."

Skinorse then took out Annie's spatial bracelet from her wrist and brought out her crossbow from the bracelet.

"This is good stuff!" whispered Skinorse in admiration, and then from the spatial bracelet he took out the crossbow's quiver. He turned to his companions and spoke, "Alright now, the Assassin's approaching. Make sure she doesn't see us."

Kanorse held his breath, one hand gripping tightly on his sword.

A while later, the Assassin ran past the tree without even noticing them behind it, as she intently pursued the magical illusion still running up ahead.

Looking at this, Skinorse gave the Magician a thumbs-up, and mouthed out his words noiselessly, "Morrigan, your spell worked like a charm!"

The Magician grinned back at him, apparently pleased at this as well.

The Assassin had now disappeared off into the depths of the woods in pursuit of the magical illusion.

Skinorse stood up and said, "It's not safe here, we'd best get a move on. Give me the princess, Kanorse."

Now extremely weakened from the loss of blood, Kanorse handed Annie over to him.

Giving the princess a glance, Skinorse frowned and said to the young woman beside him in an urgent tone, "She's badly injured. I can barely feel her heartbeat. Moya, quick, she's in need of an emergency divine spell!"

The young woman did not need to be told twice. Her hand was already holding a white globe of light, which she pressed against Annie's chest. Kanorse could see clearly that Annie had begun breathing even more deeply.

It was definitely a good thing they had a priestess in their midst.

Skinorse then waved a hand at them. "Alright, let's go. The Naga may be back for us soon."

Saying this, he began leading the way through the woods. He seemed to be the most familiar with this stretch of the woods. After walking along a narrow pathway through the woods, the sound of running water finally reached their ears from up ahead. After a while, in front of them appeared a cliff, which was a hundred feet drop to the ground. A waterfall thundered down along the cliff face.

"This way, everyone this way. Morrigan, you're up."

Skinorse then tied a rope around everyone's waist, while Morrigan began casting Levitation on each member of the party.

"Now jump!"

Skinorse was the first to jump down the cliff, and his two other companions followed suit. Still having his reservations about this, he jumped after the others nonetheless.

The five of them started free-falling along the waterfall. When they reached 50 feet off the ground at the midsection of the waterfall, Morrigan released a Level-3 Gale spell.

With the sudden gust of wind, all five of them were blown towards the waterfall while floating in mid-air. Just when they were about to collide against the waterfall, Morrigan gave his wand another flick, and from the water jutted out a rock which split the downward current of water in half. A two-foot-high, three-feet-wide hole had appeared below the waterfall.

The group floated into the hole, and the rock closed up behind them, bringing the curtain of water back down against the cliff face.

The cave that they found themselves in was around 100 square feet, and the air inside was somewhat humid. With a wave of his wand, Morrigan gathered all the water in the air into a small sphere of water. He then guided the ball of water out of the cave back through the hole beneath the waterfall with his wand. In an instant, the cave felt drier and more comfortable than before.

With a laugh, Skinorse explained, "This is a hiding hole carved out from the cliff face with stone magic by Morrigan himself. It's pretty handy. With the waterfall outside cloaking our presences, the Naga should not be able to find us here."

While saying this, he placed Annie on a stone platform, letting the priestess to begin treating the princess' wounds. Kanorse let out a sigh of relief and took out a bottle of Greater Healing Potion to drink from it.

"If I were you, I wouldn't start drinking potions now," said the priestess Moya all of a sudden without looking at Kanorse. She was slowly extracting out the broken pieces of wood from Annie's back with a silver scalpel.

Somewhat surprised, Kanorse put down the potion. "Then what should I do?"

"Lie down there. I'll heal you after this," said Moya reassuringly.

She seemed to be an expert in the healing arts among the group. Kanorse shrugged and found another stone platform to lie on.

Skinorse gave Kanorse a wide grin, pointed at Moya, then gave him a thumbs-up. He whispered, "She's the leader of this group, her word is law here."

Kanorse smiled weakly back. He knew that he could trust Skinorse, despite his treasure-hunting tendencies. He relaxed himself on the stone platform.

"Morrigan, I need some clean water," said Moya.

"Coming." Morrigan went to the waterfall and filled a silver dish with water from it. A fireball appeared from the tip of his wand and melted into the water, which then began to boil violently. About ten seconds later, Morrigan drew out the fireball from the water, bringing the water temperature down in an instant. All impurities had been removed completely from the water as a result.

Morrigan then brought the water to Moya. Looking at Annie's back, he sighed. "Her wound looks deep."

Moya washed the silver scalpel in the water and continued cleaning Annie's wound. "It's truly a good thing none of her vital points were hit. The biggest hurdle here is removing every single piece of broken wood from her body. If I miss even one, there may be complications."

Moya once again conjured a ball of light in her hand and began repairing a broken blood vessel.

As she treated Annie in concentration, on the other side of the cave, Skinorse and Kanorse had begun a conversation with each other.

Skinorse asked, "Why were you being chased by those Nagas?"

Kanorse was somewhat confused. "Nagas? You mean those two Assassins?"

"Of course, didn't you notice how supple their bodies were? We had crossed paths

with them a week ago... I would have surely died right there if I had not run fast enough," said Skinorse, still looking tense from the memory.

"Tch, I was the one who saved you. You even tore a big hole in the crotch of your pants," added Morrigan.

Skinorse blushed furiously. "I just couldn't use my portal rune in time. Do you guys even have one?"

He took out a red runestone and began brandishing it in the others' faces.

Kanorse asked, taken aback by this, "Wasn't this given to you by Master Link?"

"He cheated it from him!" Morrigan interjected.

"To deceive others is a talent in itself, and sadly, not many are gifted in it," said Skinorse slyly. He put back the runestone, and then asked, "I see that both of you are heading south and that there's a letter in Princess Annie's hand. Whose letter is it, if I may ask?"

Skinorse brought out the letter that was drenched in the princess' blood.

Kanorse did not bother hiding the truth. "We were to send it to Master Link on the marshall's orders... Seems that the marshall has come across some problems."

"I see. Well, let's have a look at the letter then, shall we?" said Skinorse.

"No, it's only for Master Link's eyes... Ah, you..."

Skinorse had already torn open the envelope. "Don't be such a stiff, Kanorse. I'm just taking a peek at the letter, it's not like I'm going to swallow it."

He took out the letter, and after reading it a few times, he frowned at it, clearly troubled by its content.

When he had finished reading the letter, Skinorse gulped, wet his dried-out lips with his tongue, and stared at his companions. "There's gonna be trouble, people!" he said hoarsely.

Chapter 473

Destiny Cannot Be Defied

Waterfall cave

Skinorse read the contents of the letter.

"Master, I cannot control the demon in my heart... The will to kill is eating away at my soul. A sinister existence is tempting me. She also planted a plague in Gladstone... Ah, I must control myself... no, no, that's too hard. I don't know what I may do. I just want to kill right now. I want to kill everyone... I need power... ah, I can't control myself anymore!"

Both the letter's content and handwriting were messy. There would be pauses occasionally too. One could feel the writer's conflicted thoughts. Skinorse read softly; the content made everyone in the cave quiet down.

When he finished, the cave was silent. The only sounds came from Priest Moya. She was treating Annie's wounds. Her expression was still calm, and her movements were steady. She didn't seem affected at all.

After a long while, Kanorse said, "I saw General massacre Garrason Town with my own eyes. Many innocent civilians were killed just for interacting with victims of the plague. There were more than 30,000 people in the town. Less than 800 survived. If Gladstone really had the plague, I'm afraid..."

Gladstone City had a population of more than 100,000. The army had gone once the plague erupted. With the general's current state, there must have been an unprecedented massacre.

"I'm afraid Master Link might be the only one to stop Duke Abel," Morrigan said. "We must bring this letter to him."

"Who'll do it?" Skinorse asked.

As soon as he spoke, everyone looked at him, including Priest Moya.

"Your Battle Aura is now at Level-8," Morrigan said. "You're best at sneaking around, and you're fast. You aren't hurt either. You are the most suitable."

"By myself?" Skinorse wasn't confident. Nagas had stopped Kanorse earlier. This meant that they knew about the letter's existence.

He knew first-hand how terrifying the Nagas were. If he ran into them on the way, he would basically be dead meat.

At that time, Moya pulled all wooden shards from Annie's back. She took out a thin silver needle and threaded it to start stitching up Annie's wound. While threading carefully, she said, "Princess Annie and Kanorse's injuries are very grave. This is a juncture. Especially Kanorse, I can feel that his energy has changed. When he recovers, he might level up to the Legendary state, but this requires rest. He shouldn't exert too much energy for the next month."

Morrigan shrugged. "I'll only hold you back. My magic is needed to keep this cave hidden as well."

Skinorse made a face and scratched his head. "I shouldn't have looked at the letter. Now I've dug a ditch for myself."

If he knew this would happen, he would've minded his own business instead of saving them.

Kanorse looked apologetic. "Should I go with you?"

Skinorse sighed, shaking his head. "It's fine. You're so injured, you'll kill me."

He put the letter away and said to everyone in the cave, "Alright, I'm going now. This will be very dangerous. If you have any lifesaving things, please give me some."

Moya tossed over a bottle. "This is a highly effective potion, equal to a Level-7 healing spell. Use it when needed."

Morrigan tossed him a ring. "Apparition Ring. This is what keeps me alive. You know how to use it, right?"

"I know; I've wanted this ring for a long time. Thanks."

Kanorse thought for a while. He didn't have anything and could only shrug. "Sorry."

Skinorse wasn't surprised at this. Kanorse was a pure Warrior and only knew how to fight head on. He wasn't from a high-class family either. The only good thing on him was the sword that Link had made for him.

If he had any lifesaving things, he wouldn't get beaten by the Nagas so badly.

"It's alright. These things and Princess Annie's crossbow should be enough." Skinorse put everything away and said, "Time is tight, so I'll go now. Moya, if anything happens, don't cry for me. Just pray, and I'll go to heaven happily."

"Psh!" Moya rolled her eyes and went back to the treatment, ignoring him.

Skinorse chuckled. He turned to look at the waterfall and took a deep breath. Then he said to Morrigan, "Give me a waterproof shield."

Morrigan took down a Level-2 Protective Barrier. A glassy glow enveloped Skinorse, and he started running. At the mouth of the cave, he jumped in a standard diving form. He burst out of the waterfall. Only his voice traveled back to the cave, "Everyone, the amazing hero has stepped onto an epic path again."

Everyone in the cave was speechless.

Outside, Skinorse slid down the waterfall and quickly entered the pool of water below. He struggled for a while before he was free from the fast current. By the time he climbed onto the bank, the protective spell was already dim.

However, its job was done. Skinorse was still dry. His Battle Aura vibrated and broke the enchantment. The light gray Battle Aura emerged, obscuring his body.

He ducked into the forest and disappeared.

Not long after, a Naga appeared by the water. She circled the place. After a while, she sped towards the direction that Skinorse had disappeared in.

However, successfully pursuing someone depended on brains instead of speed.

The Naga wasn't very successful. After half an hour, she had to stop because she'd completely lost Skinorse. She paced around, seemingly very agitated. A few minutes

later, she sped towards another direction. After many miles, there was an empty space around 150 feet wide. It was an empty camp surrounded by a wooden wall.

Two big and meaty demons stood by the entrance as guards. There were seven or eight Nagas and more than 20 Dark Elves inside.

A Dark Elf went up to the Naga. "Lord, you're back."

The Naga nodded and tossed her spear to the Dark Elf. She went towards the round-topped wooden cabin in the center of the camp. At the door, she knocked lightly. "Commander?"

"Enter," a soft female voice said. At the same time, the door creaked open.

The Naga walked in. Inside, a black-haired Naga was twisting around in incredible postures on the ground. She was working out.

Other than the impossible flexible body, the black-haired Naga looked just like a human girl. Her body was even smaller than the average Naga. The only special characteristic was a dark red spear mark on the left side of her forehead.

Seeing her subordinate, she brought her feet down from the back of her head. Glancing at the subordinate's expression, she asked, "Why did you fail? Was Ellie killed?"

The Naga nodded and spat, "We were going to succeed, but a human Magician popped out, saving them. I found their aura later, but he's very tricky, and I lost him."

"Did they take the general's letter?" The black-haired Naga covered her forehead. She seemed to have a headache. The human general was about to become the master's killer, but then something like this had to happen.

After a few minutes of silence, she suddenly said, "Link destroyed Master's altar. This means he will go north soon. Since we can't stop the letter, let's go stop Link."

"How? We don't know how he'll get there."

"That's easy. Link has Yabbas in his territory, and he has their airships. Since he's going north, he'll most likely use their ships. That way, he'll go in a straight line from Ferde to the Orida Fortress. If we go straight south, we'll definitely run into him."

The other Naga was still hesitant. "Commander," she said softly, "Link is a Legendary Magician who specializes in spatial magic. I'm afraid we're not his match."

Earlier, he'd destroyed three altars and killed two pets. This type of ability was honestly terrifying.

The black-haired Naga scoffed. "He's powerful, but we have more people. I want to experience his power too! I believe that even if I can't kill him, I can definitely defeat him. We don't have much time. Let's go now!"

As she spoke, she stood up and grabbed in the air. Light flashed, and a spear crackling with silver lightning appeared in her hands.

It wasn't just lightning. At closer inspection, one would see that when the spear's tip cut across the air, it would create ripples. The silver-white body also had a line of golden Agatha runes.

Translated, it meant, "Destiny cannot be defied."

Seeing the spear, the Naga Warrior was stunned. "The Spear of Victory! Did Master give it to you?"

The Spear of Victory was an upper order Legendary weapon. It was ranked fifth of all the Legendary weapons in Agatha history. Usually, the God of Destruction would only give it to his most beloved and talented Agatha Naga.

The black-haired Naga looked proud. "Yes, he gave it to me. I believe it will bring victory to us, just like in history!"

The Naga Warrior lowered onto one knee and sighed. "That human Magician is going to be in trouble!"

Chapter 474

Who's Ambushing Whom?

Ferde, on the airship's platform

The Yabba Battle Airships floated 20 feet off the platform, ready for takeoff. Its doors were open, waiting for the people on the platform to enter.

The purpose of Link's visit to Orida Fortress this time was to revoke Marshall Abel's authority, but he could not do this alone. Despite being the Lord of Ferde, he was not Duke Abel's superior. No matter how high his prestige was, Duke Abel would not take a command from him.

Of course, if there was anyone who had the power to give such an order to the duke, it would have to be King Leon himself, who had been residing in Ferde.

And so, King Leon had agreed to come along with him.

Leon had always been concerned about his brother. With the king by his side, Link now stood on solid ground to take action.

He still needed the strength to defend himself against any opposition.

He would have to face Duke Abel's personal bodyguards, which may include the Agatha Nagas.

He would not be able to cover every contingency in this operation, which was why he had brought in a bit of help.

Celine was one of the people Link had brought in. Her Huge Fire Gun had Level-9 offensive power, and she also had the ability to anticipate attacks. Her striking distance was an impressive 2000 feet, and Link would certainly have the upper hand by having her provide covering fire from afar.

She was Link's trump card.

Besides her, Link had assembled 40 Warriors armed with magic pistols. If need be, they will rain down a Level-7 storm of bullets in an instant.

He had also brought with him three Level-8 Dragon Warriors, including Felina.

This assembly of Warriors, and the magic cannons the Battle Airships were equipped with should be enough to suppress the entire battlefield.

Before long, everyone had gotten on board. The Battle Airships then began gaining altitude when everyone was settled on board. Once they reached 6000 feet in the air, the airships began making their way straight towards Orida.

After a while in the air, Link suddenly felt that something was not right.

It was a vague sensation, but he sensed that something might happen if they were to fly straight towards the fortress.

Before Link became a Legendary Magician, he had his fair share of premonitions like this. He had a nightmare on the eve of the demon 'Tarlvess' release from its imprisonment back when he was still a student at the East Cove Magic Academy.

But it had happened only in his dreams.

While sleeping, the human mind was in a state of repose. During this time, a sense of foreboding may present itself within the dreams of people with stronger spirits, like Magicians, in reaction to impending danger.

However, when one was awake, the human mind was in a state of disorder. Any form of premonition would encounter interference from a stray thought and be easily misinterpreted as a sign of an overactive imagination. In the past, Link tended to ignore these subtle warnings given to him by his mind.

Now, Link sensed that same nagging feeling, though it was a bit too weak. He had no way of knowing whether it was a real premonition or just his mind playing tricks on him again. After much thought, he decided to play it safe.

Before he even spoke, Celine, who was sitting beside him, whispered, "Link, could you have the captain change our current course? There's something wrong about this."

Celine had a gift for clairvoyance. Hearing this from her, Link gave his order to the

captain without any hesitation. "Merlin, take a detour here."

Merlin seemed vexed by this. "My lord, I'm afraid that's not possible."

"Why's that?"

Merlin explained, "The airship's flying distance is limited. It only has enough magic crystals to fly for 2800 miles at most. As the straight line distance to Orida Fortress from our point of departure was 1200 miles, we only have enough for a round trip. If we take a detour now, I fear we may not be able to go back to Ferde."

Link thought for a while, then came up with an idea. "How about this: stop using the magic seal for now, and I'll use a spatial field to move the airship."

Everyone in the cabin was speechless at this. An airship of this size weighed around 100 tons. Even if Link managed to keep it afloat in the air, how much power would he need to expend? And how long would he be able to take the strain?

It was also important to note that they still had to fly for a few thousand miles before reaching their destination.

Merlin said uncertainly, "My lord, are you sure that's alright?"

He had never experienced such a thing in his tenure as the airship's captain.

Link nodded. "Yes, don't worry about a thing."

As Merlin knew how strong Link was, he then ordered the rest of the crew, "Let's slow down the airship, and have it hanging in the air now."

Hum, hum... The airship's magic seal began rotating backwards. After half a minute, the airship had stopped moving forward and was now bobbing silently in the air.

Link began meditating, his mind sinking into a deep concentration. Dragon Power flowed from his body into the airship and distributed itself throughout the vessel's pressure points. With a sudden push of his will, Link activated a spell that he had spent the last couple of days working on: Void Walk.

Void Walk

Level-11 Legendary Spell

Cost: 10-100 Dragon Power points per second

Weight Limit: 500 tons.

Description: Apply changes in space curvature to generate push. There is no limit to the direction of the push. Change in direction is immediate in effect.

(Note: This is an extremely powerful field spell.)

When the spell was cast, everyone felt a slight tremor in the airship. After a while, it steadied itself once again. Link then said to Merlin, "Alright, you can turn off the magic seal slowly."

The crew members all looked at their commander Merlin, hesitant to make any move. Merlin too was nervous about this, as he feared that the airship might fall out of the sky at any moment. After hesitating for a few seconds, he finally gestured at his crew to do as they were instructed.

The magical power input in the airship gradually began decreasing. Half a minute later, the source of magical power had been completely shut off. Despite this, the entire airship remained floating steadily in the air still.

Link carefully began raising the airship. He could feel his Dragon Power being expended at a rate of around 41 points per second. Taking into account his current Dragon Power recovery rate, which was 37 points per second, he was effectively spending 5 points of Dragon Power every second.

His present maximum Dragon Power was at 13900 points. By pushing the airship forward for 40 minutes with his Dragon Power, Link was able to make up for any loss of magical power the detour might incur.

"Alright, sit tight now. I'm going to accelerate," said Link.

Link began slowly changing the field's direction while increasing his Dragon Power input into the airship. The whole vessel began picking up speed till it hurtled through the air even faster than before.

Whoo, whoo whoo... Wind rushed into the cabin as they sped through the air. Merlin

looked at the airship's speedometer and saw that it was indicating a speed of 1060 miles per hour. They were traveling twice as fast as before when the airship was still powered by their supply of magic crystals.

What was even more surprising was the fact that the entire vessel did not so much as sway as it flew through the sky. If it were not for the roaring wind and the rapidly changing scenery, they would not have sensed that the airship was even moving.

The airship's movement was even steadier than before.

The Yabba crew members within the airship were all stunned by this.

The expression on the three Dragon Warriors was one of pride and reverence towards the display of their duke's sheer power.

As for King Leon, he initially had some reservations about this journey to the North. However, upon witnessing Link's power, he let out an inward sigh. He should be safe in his hands.

The rest of the Warriors too looked at Link with fervent admiration.

Only Celine remained unmoved by this. She had already known the extent of Link's power. Seeing everyone's expression of awe and shock on the airship, she could not help but smile.

Link, however, was oblivious to his surroundings at the moment. His mind was wholly concentrated on maneuvering the airship through the air while feeling both the inner workings of the airship and any changes in the air current outside.

Five minutes later, the airship was now flying over the ocean and then along the coastline in a straight line.

After flying approximately 500 miles for half an hour, Link began slowing down. When he had reduced the airship's speed to 500 miles per hour, Link said to Merlin, "Alright, resume magical power input. I'm letting go now."

Feeling even more confident about Link's abilities, Merlin commanded his crew to do as such.

The crew began working to increase the airship's magical power input as they were

told. Link gradually lowered his Dragon Power input as he felt the airship regaining control of itself.

Five minutes later, Link finally returned control of the airship back to the crew. Throughout the whole process, the airship did not sway even the slightest bit.

Link then looked at Celine, who instantly knew what he was about to ask. She nodded. "There shouldn't be any problems now."

Hearing this, he gave his order to the crew, "Fly us straight to Orida now."

They had taken the detour completely on a whim. If an accident were to happen at this point, Link had no choice but to accept that luck was never on their side to begin with.

After flying for another 20 minutes, when Link's Dragon Power had fully recovered in him, Merlin suddenly reported to him, "My lord, there's something up ahead."

He then gestured at one of his co-pilots, who tapped on a few runes. A magical image appeared in the middle of the cabin, showing a large eagle with 50-foot wingspan flying in front of them. On the eagle's back rode ten or so figures.

From the image, Link recognized that those figures belonged to Agatha Nagas. From the looks of it, they were all heading for Orida Fortress. This did not bode well for them.

Link asked, somewhat stunned, "How far are they? Did they notice us?"

"They're 50 miles away from us and probably still haven't noticed us," Merlin replied.

Link thought for a moment, then said, "Follow them closely, I'll ambush them from behind!"

In the previous game world, with the exception of a few Naga Priests, most Agatha Nagas could not fly. By killing off the giant eagle, he could send the Nagas spiraling to their deaths 6000 feet from the sky!

Chapter 475

Katyusha in the Ruins

Three miles in the air, the sky was sapphire blue. A huge hawk with a wingspan of more than 100 feet flew in the air.

The hawk looked really strange. From afar, it looked like a hawk. But closer, Link discovered that it was covered in metallic dark red scales. They glowed faintly, and he could see many divine runes on them. They emitted a repressive aura. As for the wings, they were made of feathers, but at a glance, they looked like rows of knives. The edges glinted like blades.

Seeing this, Link realized what it was. It should be a pet, transformed from a Dragonhawk. It must be really powerful!

Regular Dragonhawks were similar, but their wingspans were at most 60 feet. The Agatha Nagas had displayed divine domestication spells before so Link wasn't surprised.

A sound floated through the air. It was an Agatha Naga speaking from the back of the Dragonhawk. Instead of attacking immediately, Link hung around two miles away from the Dragonhawk and listened closely.

"It's weird. The information said that Link's ship left, but there's been no trace. Did he crash halfway through?" The speaker was a Naga Warrior. Link also saw a small black-haired Naga sitting in front of her. For some reason, Link found her familiar, but most of her body was covered so he couldn't see clearly.

"Alright, stop complaining. There's nothing absolute in this world. If Link was so easy to deal with, he wouldn't be so famous. He must have taken a detour," another voice said. It was too far away so Link couldn't pinpoint who exactly was speaking. He did feel that the voice was familiar though. It was as soft as a floating feather; it was lovely too.

The voice sounds like Misamier but smoother. I must have heard it somewhere before.

If Link heard it from the front, he would definitely be able to remember. However, they were three miles up and sped along at a couple hundred feet per second. The wind flew past them, distorting the voice Link heard, so he couldn't think of the person at the moment.

After a while, another voice said, "Commander, are we going to the Orida Fortress like this?"

"Yes. We'll change our outfits and go in. Humans look similar to us. If we say we're going to join the army, they have no reason to stop us from entering."

It was that lovely voice again. Now Link knew that she was the Naga commander.

After that, another conversation started on the back of the Dragonhawk. Complaints were thrown in too. Link listened patiently and soon could piece together their plan.

He hadn't cleared all the Naga spies from the territory. These Nagas were able to find out the time and path he would take to go north. They'd been waiting for him on the way, but then he changed direction, so they didn't get anything. Since they missed him, they decided to turn north and join the Orida Fortress to become the general's soldiers.

To be honest, there was nothing wrong with their plan. From the outside, Nagas had no big difference from humans. Their energy was the dark red power of destruction. It was very different from Dark power and was rarely seen in the mainland. It was easy to fool others.

Once these Nagas successfully went to Duke Abel's side, it would be extremely troublesome for Link.

At this moment, Link's vision flashed. It was a mission.

Activate Mission: Intercept

Mission Content: While ensuring your own safety, stop the Agatha Nagas from entering the Orida Fortress.

Mission Reward: 10 Jogu

Seeing this, Link got an idea. There were only 13 Nagas on the Dragonhawk, all around

Level-8 or nine. Only three were truly threatening to Link.

The first was the Naga at the very front, clad in a black and red dress. She was probably a Naga priestess. The other was the black-haired Naga. Link could feel that she was at the peak of Level-10. The last one was the Dragonhawk pet. The God of Destruction protected it, and it was extremely combative. However, its size meant that it wasn't that agile. It was probably the least threatening of the three.

Even if it was these three, he should probably be okay if he was careful... Did they have some powerful battle techniques or crazy weapons? No matter what, the game warned him, so he had to be prepared.

He accepted the mission and quietly snuck towards the Dragonhawk's body from below.

Link's Void Walk was very powerful. At full force, it was as fast as his dragon form. The Dragonhawk wasn't that fast. It was even slower than a Yabba airship's cruising speed. It was only around 400 feet per minute, and Link could catch up easily.

The distance between them closed. Two miles... one mile... half a mile... Link saw the black-haired Naga start looking side to side. She felt something.

Link immediately stopped approaching and started putting everything into restricting the sound of wind around him. After following quietly for more than ten seconds, the black-haired Naga still didn't let down her guard.

"That's strange. Something feels wrong," she started to say.

Now, Link was much closer to her and could hear her voice more clearly. He felt even more that her voice was familiar now. He must have heard her in the game, and she must be some Naga boss that caused him a lot of trouble.

Who is she? Who is she?

Link started thinking back. In the game, he'd killed 16 Naga bosses from the Silversand Islands in total. Each one had their own characteristics. There were a few black-haired ones too... Wait, Link suddenly remembered her name.

Her full name was: Victory's Vow, Agatha's Glory, Katyusha in the Ruins. She'd appeared in the second half of the game and was one of the few horrible bosses that

could only be killed with the Suicide Battle Technique.

What was a Suicide Battle Technique?

This meant that the boss would use a powerful move every two seconds. This move would hit the player with the highest hatred level. It couldn't be avoided, blocked, or freed from. Even the divine shield known by Holy Knights as "undefeatable" would be defeated in one hit.

Only a sea of Warriors could defeat Katyusha. They had to charge one by one to block her moves and tire her out with rounds of Warriors.

Link remembered that in the game, two guilds had teamed up to form a group of 1000 players. By the end, 857 had died, each from one hit. When Katyusha's bloodline was below ten percent, her attack speed would increase by 200% and make a move every 0.6 seconds... It had been a total bloodbath.

Meeting Katyusha again in real life, Link discovered she wasn't as powerful. In order to take care of the players, the game set the rule that Katyusha had to make a move every two seconds and hit the player with the highest hatred level. There was no such rule in the real world.

In real life, she might have other restrictions, but she would definitely be agile to the max. If she came at Link and he wasn't ready, he would be dead meat.

Link thought for a few seconds and came up with a plan.

First, he waited for more than ten seconds. During that time, Katyusha looked side to side on the Dragonhawk. She didn't find anything strange but still kept her guard up. A spear that shone like lightning appeared in her hands.

Seeing this, Link gulped reflexively.

He obviously recognized this spear. It was the Spear of Victory, a Legendary weapon only for Warriors. Of all the Legendary weapons that had appeared in the game, it was ranked fourth, above his Dragon King's Fury sword.

After killing Katyusha, she would drop broken pieces of the sword. After collecting 20 pieces and completing some missions, he could find a dwarf blacksmith to make a low-level Legendary Glory Spear. After a dozen more missions, the last mission would be

to trick the God of Destruction. Then he could quench the Glory Spear and create the Victory Spear.

The spear's basic damage was already really high. It only had one effect but was perversely powerful and could be actively triggered. It was called the Thorn of Fate. Once triggered, the player's next attack against a creature would increase 50 times or ten times against a player. It was unavoidable too.

Even more terrifying, the effect could be both long and short-range. When close enough, it could pierce an enemy directly. When further away, it could be thrown. Either way, it would hit its mark and was unstoppable.

In the game, Warriors were a very tragic career. They could only fight and charge brutishly. The other careers could play circles around them if they had even the slightest technical skill. A Magician especially could send a Warrior to thousands of feet up in the air and have them freefall.

But once a Warrior had the Spear of Victory, they would become an undefeatable hero. They could defeat anyone in seconds, and everyone would try to avoid them.

Of course, players who won the Spear of Victory in the game could be counted on one hand.

This was real life though. There was no difference between creatures and players. As soon as Link saw the Spear of Victory, he got rid of the idea to clash directly with Katyusha.

Fully guarded against Katyusha, Link crept towards the Dragonhawk. When he was around 2000 feet away, he stopped. He was now under the beast and in Katyusha's blind spot. He could attack from here without worrying about Katyusha's immediate reaction.

Taking a deep breath, Link took out the Dragon King's Fury sword.

Despair Ball

A spatial sphere containing a black vortex appeared immediately. Link stabbed forward. Another Despair Ball appeared at the furthest place possible, and he activated another one. This way, the sword's tip instantly crossed 2300 feet, arriving under the Dragonhawk's belly.

The Dragonhawk was a god's pet and was protected by divine power. Link's Despair Ball couldn't penetrate it, but this was enough.

The Dragon King's Fury sword pushed against the scales on the Dragonhawk's belly and stabbed forward. He activated Boundless Sharpness, and the scales were pierced. The sword buried in 12 inches deep, entering the Dragonhawk's body.

"Void Destructor!"

The Red Dragon Queen had given him this spell. It worked well with Dragon Power. Its strength went without saying, and it was fast too. A dark purple fireball instantly appeared at the sword tip and then exploded.

Boom! Fire spewed out from the Dragonhawk's belly. Flames spread deep inside it and burst out from other places. Seeing this, Link knew that it was game over for the Dragonhawk.

He didn't stop for a second. Immediately activating the Dimensional Jump, he jumped, jumped, and jumped for up to three miles before starting to fly.

Link had put much thought into the direction he flew in. Rather than going towards the airship, he flew elsewhere, just in case.

He heard the Dragonhawk's wail and the Agatha Naga's surprised and angry roars. He turned and saw the Dragonhawk's flaming body plummet. The Agatha Nagas on its back also fell.

Link saw Katyusha too. She stood on the Dragonhawk's back and stared at Link. Her furious voice traveled over. "Link, don't run!"

Then he saw the Naga priestess cast a mysterious spell on Katyusha. A pair of red wings, seemingly solid, sprouted behind her back. She flapped her wings and charged towards Link. She was only a bit slower than him.

Link was speechless. He wasn't scared of getting caught, but now that he had someone on his tail, he wouldn't be able to get to the Orida Fortress on time.

But then he thought, Divine spells have time limits. I just need to drag things out.

Chapter 476

The Naga's Spear and Celine's Guns

All mission weapons had some sort of weakness. Something as strong as the Spear of Victory was no exception to this rule.

However, Link had not the slightest idea where that weakness could be.

This was the first time Link had encountered such a weapon, and so he did not want to risk taking a full hit from the spear, especially when its wielder was one who showed no qualms about taking his life. In an instant, Katyusha had caught up to him, and his first instinct then was to run away from her immediately.

Everyone who had been watching the whole battle unfold on the airship was all surprised to see Link fleeing from the Agatha Naga.

"What's going on? Why has Master Link chosen to run? He hasn't even started fighting."

"The lightning spear in the lady's hand looks incredibly powerful!"

"Should we go out and help?" asked one of the Red Dragon Warriors.

"No, don't. The lord has sent out his signal," shouted Merlin, the captain of the airship.

Everyone looked at the magical image in the middle of the airship's cabin and saw that Link was holding out his wand while flying at top speed through the air. From his wand, a stream of light began flowing out and forming a row words in front of him.

"Powerful Naga weapon, withdraw now!"

All of them looked at each, curious as to what kind of weapon had caused even Link to flee. As it was a direct order from their lord, the airship began making its retreat.

Just then, when the airship had only turned halfway around, tragedy struck once more.

Celine shouted, "Not good, she's spotted us!"

In the magical image, the black-haired Naga who had sprouted a pair of dark red wings from her back seemed to be gazing in their direction. A few seconds later, she gave up pursuing Link and began speeding towards the airship.

Alarmed, Merlin asked, "How fast is she flying?"

One of his co-pilots conjured a magic seal from a fingertip and hastily tapped a few times on it. A few seconds later, he reported back to the captain, "800 feet per second, sir! She'll reach us in one minute!"

The airship's speed was no more than 180 feet per second, and its length from tip to tail was over 20 feet. The entire vessel was like a whale sluggishly floating in the air and waiting to be pounced upon by a more agile predator that was rapidly gaining on them.

Under such circumstances, escape was futile!

Merlin immediately gave an order to the rest of his crew. "Stand your ground, men. Ready the magic cannons and prepare for combat!"

The idea was that they might stand a better chance of winning this fight by taking their enemy head-on with everything they had instead of running away with their tails tucked between their legs and leaving themselves wide open to the enemy's attacks.

The airship's crew members moved in sync with each other as they dexterously adjusted the magical power output from the airship's vents. With short intervalled whistles, the Battle Airship came to a stop in the air.

Metallic thumps resonated from every corner of the airship. Every magic cannon was brought out and aimed at the enemy. From the end of the cannon barrels radiated a brilliant light as they began charging up with magical power.

All Warriors on board the airship had also started making preparations for the battle ahead.

Captain Merlin continued giving his orders without any sign of panic.

"Put on your parachutes, everyone!" he ordered, as a precaution for when the worst-

case scenario should come to pass.

One of the Warriors helped King Leon put on a parachute, while a Yabba man stood on the other side, teaching him how to use it.

"Your Highness, do you see this string? If anything happens, and you find yourself free-falling in the air, just pull on this string, which will deploy your parachute immediately, and you'll be able to float yourself to safety. Maybe. At most, you'll probably come out of this with two broken legs. Well then, God bless."

King Leon never had any experience in aerial warfare. His face had gone completely pale, and he seemed to be on the verge of vomiting.

The three Red Dragon Warriors had all leaped out of the cabin. Taking on their dragon forms, they circled around the airship in the air as an additional layer of defense.

Celine and the rest of the marksmen all assembled on the second floor of the cabin, where firing ports had been fixed on both sides of the airship. The firing ports were reserved for Yabba snipers. However, in this case, Celine and the others were the only ones on the airship capable of striking from a distance, and so readied their guns at each port to fire at the incoming Naga.

Ten seconds later, all battle preparations had been made throughout the airship.

In the distance, Link did not expect such a turn of events.

He had not anticipated that Katyusha would be able to notice the airship 50 miles away in the air. With the airship now being targeted by her, he had no choice but to bring the fight straight to her!

Link cautiously kept himself at least 2000 feet away from his adversary. He had a vague feeling that if he were to go any closer, there would be trouble.

Whether his hunch was right or not mattered little; he dared not take any chances at this point.

He was now flying at 1000 feet per second, which was even faster than Katyusha. This gave him the chance to seize the initiative.

Despite knowing this, Katyusha ignored Link and continued making a beeline for the

airship.

When Katyusha was within 10,000 feet of the airship, Link had already reached the airship's vicinity. He stopped before the vessel, and shouted, "The Naga is holding a Legendary spear. As soon as she throws it towards you, abandon the airship immediately!"

Everyone on board was stunned at the mention of the Legendary weapon.

When Link had finished speaking, Katyusha was already within 3000 feet away.

He estimated that his foe's maximum striking range was approximately 2000 feet. Even with Dimensional Jump and Instant Flash at his disposal, he had no intention of closing the gap between them.

In the game, once the Thorn of Fate had been activated by the Spear of Victory, it would lock on to its target. Even if a Magician were to use spatial spells like Instant Flash to escape to the other side of the continent, the Thorn of Fate would still find its mark.

This spear simply possessed unfathomable divine power!

Before he departed, Link suddenly caught a glimpse of Celine and felt uneasy about leaving her on board. Celine's aim was true, but not enough to kill a Legendary opponent. If she caught the Naga's attention and was then targeted by the spear, she would instantly be vaporized.

With the force of his will, a white light engulfed Celine's entire body. In an instant, she reappeared outside the airship right beside Link.

"What the...?" Celine was bewildered by her sudden teleportation in the air.

"You're with me now," said Link.

He took out a leather rope and willed it to bind Celine to his back using the Magician's Hand. "Grab on tight!" he said, before leaving the airship behind.

Before flying away, he spoke to Felina and the other Red Dragon Warriors, "The Naga is a Legendary creature, and extremely powerful. Keep your distance for now, and only attack when I give the order!"

"Understood!" replied the three Dragon Warriors, their faces stern.

Katyusha had now reached 2000 feet away from the airship, which also happened to be the striking range of the airship.

In the airship, Merlin shouted, "Aim, and fire!"

Hum, hum, hum... Magical power swirled rapidly within the airship. Moments later, every magic cannon began opening fire, shooting out purple balls of light at Katyusha. Trails of light could be seen in the wake of their flight through the air.

Each Battle Airship was equipped with ten magic cannons on each side, each capable of firing ten rounds. Every purple ball of light dished out by each cannon packed an explosive power of around Level-7. Once it exploded, it would leave behind a fireball with a diameter of more than ten feet. The resulting balls of fire had effectively blocked off Katyusha's trajectory towards the airship.

At the same time, from the firing ports, the marksmen on board had begun raining down a bullet storm on the Naga.

Magic Pistols were powered purely by the fire element. Their barrels were exquisitely sculpted through the use of transformative spells. The sound they made with each shot was soft, but the impact of each bullet was incredibly powerful. With at least Level-6 penetrating power, even the most seasoned combatant would find it hard to defend themselves against shots taken with it.

There were 20 marksmen on board. When they opened fire in unison, a flurry of bullets instantly whistled through the air towards Katyusha.

In the face of such a concentrated attack, Katyusha had nowhere to run. She screamed, "Die!"

She then hurled the Spear of Victory at the airship. As soon as it left her hand, she immediately shielded herself with her wings.

Her dark red wings were continuously battered by the bullets and magical explosions. In the dazzling light, her wings which had been fortified by divine spells were horribly torn to pieces.

But in that moment, the Spear of Victory that she had sent flying through the air finally

struck the airship.

The spear hurtled through the air at a breakneck speed. Throughout its flight, the weapon was cloaked by a dark red cyclone of energy, which flashed out streaks of lightning. It left a trail of dark red light in its wake.

In half a second, the spear hurtled through 1500 feet in the air and struck the airship. Under the force of the impact, the entire vessel was immediately torn in half.

The two halves of iron that once made up the airship now came crashing down from the sky.

All the Warriors on board leaped out from the gaping hole at the airship's midsection. Once in the air, they pulled open their leather parachutes. Before long, the air was filled with Warriors floating down unceremoniously to the ground.

When he saw that Katyusha had flung out the Spear of Victory, he immediately roared, "Now, attack!"

This was their chance.

Link and the three Red Dragon Warriors rushed towards the Naga together.

Link flew the fastest. In an instant, he was within a few thousand feet away from Katyusha. This was also the limit of his casting range.

With a thrust of his sword, he conjured a series of Despair Balls in the air. A purple Void Destructor sphere began forming on the sword's tip when it was within a few feet away from Katyusha.

When the spell was about to explode, Katyusha suddenly spread what was left of her wings outward. At the same time, she pulled at the Void, and the Spear of Victory she had thrown out moments ago appeared instantly in her hand.

Link was taken aback. This was bad; he had never encountered such a technique in the game before.

"Die, Link!" Katyusha screamed. With a twist of her body, she threw the Spear of Victory straight at Link.

At that moment, Link felt his heart drop. It was as if everything had slowed down around him, including the spear, which seemed to edge with excruciating slowness towards him.

He immediately detonated the Void Destructor and activated Dimensional Jump at the same time.

In the bright light, both Celine and he vanished on the spot. An instant later, they reappeared 1000 feet away. Just then, Celine shouted, "It's coming for us!"

Link cast Dimensional Jump once more.

In the span of a second, he managed to cast Dimensional Jump three times, but it was no use. The Spear of Victory showed no signs of stopping. Not only did he fail to put some distance between them and the Spear, but it also seemed to be getting closer and closer towards them.

Link stopped fleeing. At this point, he had no time to cast any spell, nor was he certain that any of them would even be effective against the spear. Right now, his sword was the only thing capable of intercepting the spear. His Dragon Power began to boil in him as it flowed into the Dragon King's Fury sword. He then thrust the sword out with all his strength.

What happened next horrified Link.

However he tried to parry it, from whichever direction he maneuvered his Dragon King's Fury sword, the Spear of Victory always managed to evade his attacks, as if it was being controlled by an unseen force.

It was as if the spear itself was able to anticipate his moves before he even thought about making them.

Just when the spear was about to pierce through his body, Celine, who was still attached to Link's back, suddenly pulled out her double pistols, "Link" and "Celine."

Her eyes began emanating a purple swirl of energy, which then spread out over her entire body, and finally flowed into both pistols in her hands.

Bang! Bang! Celine fired both pistols at the same time.

At that moment, with his tautened senses, Link was able to track the trajectories of both bullets in the air. He also saw that they were radiating off a dreamlike purple glow.

The two bullets danced and twirled through the air haphazardly, while the Spear of Victory kept changing its course, desperately attempting to anticipate where the bullets might come, but it was all in vain.

With a metallic chink, the Spear of Victory was finally struck by both bullets.

Struck by a Level-9 attack, the Spear of Victory swerved off course and then vanished in thin air.

A few thousand feet away, Katyusha, who had a Void Destructor ball of light explode in her face, once again held the Spear of Victory in her hand. Her wings now reduced to withered stalks on her back, she began to fall straight to the ground, staring in confusion at Link, or rather Celine who was still tied to his back.

At the same time, Link felt Celine's body go limp behind him. She had passed out.

Chapter 477

Power of Time

Whoosh!

With a gust of wind, another Naga with dark red wings appeared. It was that Naga priestess. She took away the falling Katyusha.

Link didn't pursue them. The power of the Spear of Victory was obvious. If he chased them and Katyusha acted again, it would be game over for him.

He continued descending with the unconscious Celine.

The three Red Dragon Warriors didn't dare chase either. They flew around in the air, saving the unlucky souls with damaged parachutes. After a flurry of activity, the group landed.

In total, two had died—one Yabba and one Warrior. The others all had light injuries with no serious problems. Deaths were unavoidable in battle. Two deaths were already good enough.

King Leon was okay too. He obviously didn't break his legs and was just a bit shocked. The Warriors gathered around the airship ruins to bury the dead and treat the injured.

Link checked on Celine. Her breathing was steady, and her heartbeat was strong. He pulled back her eyelids and shone a magic light. Her pupils reacted well. She should be fine.

Link guessed that Celine must have been exhausted by overexertion. She should recover after a bit of rest. It was clear that both the Spear of Victory and Celine had used some type of time power. They clashed using time and the Spear of Victory lost.

The Spear of Victory uses a battle technique called Thorn of Fate. Fate is a track of time. It must be able to predict all my moves. No wonder I can't block it. Link sighed inwardly.

He'd researched the mysteries of space to the extreme. However, he only grasped basic knowledge about time. He almost lost big time due to this today. Thankfully, he had Celine.

However, he still wasn't assured. In his mind, he asked the sword spirit of the Dragon King's Fury, "When do you think Celine will wake up?"

It's nothing big. She's just overexerted and will be fine in a while. You're the one with the problem.

"Me?" Link was stunned.

Yes, you. You were targeted by the Spear of Victory but weren't killed. Now, you have its causal ring on you. It will continue being in effect until the ring closes.

"Until the causal ring closes? The effect of the cause must be my death, right?" Link knew the basics of time.

Yes. In other words, you're walking towards death.

Link actually wasn't scared of this. Since the causal ring could be broken once, it could be broken a second time. "I wish the Breakpoint Dagger is here," he lamented. "Otherwise, I wouldn't be this miserable."

The Breakpoint Dagger could cut through anything, including time.

Actually, I can cut the causal ring too. As long as Boundless Sharpness is completely unlocked, you can use me to block the Spear of Victory.

Link was overjoyed. Boundless Sharpness was the effect of the Dragon King's Fury sword. It could easily cut through armor and spells. He didn't expect it could cut through time too. "How do I unlock it?" he asked hurriedly. "How much power do I need?"

I know you have a numerical value for Dragon Power. Calculating using that, I think I need at least one million Dragon Power points. I will use this to upgrade to Level-12 and unlock Boundless Sharpness at the same time.

"I see! No problem." Link nodded.

His Dragon Power recovery rate was 37 points per second. He could generate one million points in three days and give it all to the sword. It was simple.

While feeding the Dragon Power into the sword, he asked again, "How much do I need if I want to go to Level-13, 14, or completely unlock you?"

I don't know. The sword spirit's voice was a bit lost. You're my owner. How far I can go depends on what level you can reach... The Dark Serpent was once weaker than me, but his owner ignited the Sacred Fire and became the Dark Spider, so it became a divine gear.

Link smiled in his thoughts. "Don't worry. I'll keep going."

I'll wait and see.

With that, the sword spirit stopped speaking.

By then, the Warriors had mostly taken care of everything. Commander Merlin walked up to Link. "Lord, what do we do now?"

The airship was ruined. They had no way to get to the North quickly.

"Where exactly are we? How far are we from the Orida Fortress?" Link asked.

"We are in the Glen Mountains 271 miles south of the fortress," Merlin reported immediately.

"Two hundred seventy-one miles isn't far. The airship is ruined so how about you collect the usable materials and go back to Ferde. The rest of the people go find the thickest tree in the vicinity. Dig a hole in the tree and wait for me."

There were less than 120 thousand Yabbas in total; the pilots were even more valuable. They couldn't be lost carelessly and weren't that great at fighting either. There wasn't much use for them at the fortress.

That way, Link would only have to bring 19 fire gun Warriors, King Leon, and three dragon Warriors. He wanted to make a canoe with a tree and have everyone sit in it. Then he would use the Void Walk and get to the Orida Fortress in one hour.

"Yes, Lord." Everyone obeyed and left.

Link stayed to look after the unconscious Celine. A couple of minutes later, Link felt Celine move. Her eyelids quivered. After half a minute, she opened her eyes.

Seeing that she was in Link's arms, Celine's first sentence was, "Ah, I'm so tired. I can't move."

A crystal red ball of light appeared at Link's fingertip. This was the Essence Vitality of the dragons. Merging the light into Celine's body, he asked, "How does this feel? Is it effective?"

"Mm, yeah. I feel warm, but I don't wanna move." Celine didn't get up from Link's arms, and Link let her be.

At that time, Warriors shouted from the front. Something seemed to have happened.

Link's heart jumped. Scared that the Nagas had come again, he helped Celine up and went over. He saw a Red Dragon Warrior drag a strange dirty man covered in vines and leaves.

Walking over, the dragon said, "Duke, this guy was sneaking around. I think he's a spy for the Agatha Nagas!"

Seeing Link, the man pulled away the vines from around him, revealing a dirty face. "Lord, it's me, Skinorse!"

Link recognized him and asked strangely, "Why are you here? Why do you look so pathetic?"

Skinorse sighed. While struggling with the vines, he said, "I'm here to send you a letter. I was on the other side of the mountain when I saw the commotion in the sky. I saw you too, so I hurried over."

With that, he took out a bloodied letter and gave it to Link. "Princess Annie and Kanorse were supposed to send this, but they were chased by Nagas and hurt badly. My friends and I saved them, so I had to send this. It's from the general. We opened it. That's okay, right?"

He looked at Link timidly, fearing that he would get yelled at. It was different when they'd opened the letter earlier. He felt guilty when he saw Link.

Hearing this, Link frowned. He took the letter and opened it. He knew from the first word that this was indeed from Duke Abel because he recognized the handwriting.

As he read, his brows furrowed more deeply. "Do you know Gladstone's situation?" he asked Skinorse. "Does it really have the plague?"

Skinorse scratched his head. "Not sure, but I heard from some mercenaries that the plague really did happen. But the city lord reacted quickly and controlled everything."

Link was even more shocked. With Duke Abel's current state, he wouldn't care if the plague was controlled or not. He just needed an excuse to kill.

Furthermore, it was also possible that the plague was spread purposely. It could only be controlled temporarily. If the mastermind wasn't found, it would keep spreading. In other words, this might turn into a massacre in Gladstone. They would either be killed by soldiers or the plague.

The bottom line was that this was a catastrophe for the residents of Gladstone City!

"How many days have you had this?" Link asked.

"One and a half days. I had to avoid Nagas, so I couldn't go quickly. Thankfully, I met you here." Skinorse felt so lucky. If he missed Link here, everything would be delayed.

One and a half days wasn't too long. The Orida Fortress was around 60 miles north of Gladstone. It would take at least five days for the army to prepare and head over. They still had a chance.

Beside them, King Leon finally recovered. "Master Link, what's wrong?" he asked.

Link gave him the letter. King Leon accepted it and halfway through, he jumped up. "Oh, glorious God of Light, we must stop him!"

"That's what I think too."

Just then, a mission appeared in Link's vision.

Activate Mission Series: Gladstone Plague

Step One: Find the source of the plague.

Mission Content: Hurry to Gladstone and search the entire city for the distributor of the plague.

Reward 1: 100 Omni Points

Reward 2: Scapegoat Doll

Intrigued, Link checked the information for the doll.

Scapegoat Doll

Legendary

Effect: With this, the player can block one fatal attack.

(Note: My duty is to die for you.)

This was what Link needed. He immediately accepted the mission and said, "Let's go to Gladstone!"

Chapter 478

The First Clue: The Cemetery, South of the City

Northern City of Gladstone

This was where he had spent his first night in the world of Firuman, and also where he first met Celine.

Back then, the Bloody Butcher Lund of the Dark Elves had plotted to raze the whole city. Now, the Agatha Nagas had set their sights on this place and had begun spreading an epidemic here. This city was simply a magnet for all manner of calamities.

Link and the others had ridden on a one-foot-wide, 20-foot-long wooden log to the city.

Link saw nothing out of the ordinary from outside the city. There was no sign of the soldiers from the fortress up north, or even of an outbreak in the city. The only thing that struck him as odd were the passers-by walking down the streets hurriedly, a dark cloud hanging over each of their faces.

Link let out a sigh of relief.

"We seem to have made it in time," said Link. He found an empty clearing in the woods outside the city and began lowering the wooden log to the ground while regulating his Void Walk in the air.

The Warriors leaped down, a look of amazement on their faces, as it was their first time riding a wooden boat through the air.

It felt like a dream to have a mere wooden log fly them over 500 miles in one hour.

Without any delay, Link began assigning tasks to his entourage.

He said to Felina and the other two Red Dragon Warriors, "You three stand by at the main path 50 miles from here. Once the army from Orida Fortress makes an appearance, report back immediately. Also, keep yourself in the shadows. If you meet

any Agatha Nagas, do not engage them."

Felina nodded. "Understood."

The three Red Dragon Warriors then headed for the North. They did not transform into their dragon forms, as it would stand out too much.

Link then turned to Skinorse. "So are you coming with me, or will you be going back to your friends?"

Skinorse thought for a moment, then said, "I'd better go back. They're still probably waiting for me."

When he finished, Skinorse fished a small pouch from his pocket and handed it to Link. "Here, the white stones that you wanted. I went digging in an ancient tomb and managed to find 23 of those stones. See if this is what you wanted."

Link scooped the stones out from the pouch, and much to his joy saw that the white, round stones were indeed Jogus. He put away the pouch. "Excellent, I'll keep that in mind. You still need 78 more pieces to receive your reward."

A pained expression came across Skinorse's face. "If only I had known to collect these stones from the start... I've been to a lot of tombs, and those kinds of places are just brimming with them."

Link was overjoyed to hear this. "It's not too late. Remember, the more stones you collect, the better your reward will be."

"I know. Then I'm off." Skinorse then scampered off into the depths of the dense forest.

Celine, King Leon, and the 19 marksmen were all that was left of his party.

Link said to King Leon, "Your Highness, we're about to enter the city. I don't think it would be a good idea to keep your royal robe and crown on you."

At first, King Leon had intended to put the soldiers in their place in the barracks with his royal garb. Right now, though, their main concern was to handle the epidemic in the city. Wearing something as gaudy as a crown into the city would bring more harm than good to their current objective.

"Alright." King Leon did not make a fuss about it. After all, danger abounded in the North, and his survival depended solely on Link.

When King Leon had put on his guise as a normal commoner, Link said, "Alright, let's go into the city."

Saying this, he activated Dimensional Jump.

Hum... A white light enveloped the whole party. In an instant, they were teleported beyond the city walls and now found themselves in an isolated alley in the old city district of Gladstone City.

An M13 branch was stationed in the old city district. If Link was to have the latest information on the epidemic, the M13 would be a good place to start.

However, their party consisted of 19 Warriors, and they were all wearing the same uniforms while being armed with powerful magical pistols. The follower responsible for the rampant spread of the epidemic would immediately be alerted of their presence in the city.

Their only advantage now was the element of surprise, as the Agatha Nagas still had no idea of their current whereabouts.

After much thought, Link pressed a hand on a stone wall in the alley. Dragon Power flowed out from his fingers into the stone. Three seconds later, he managed to grasp the layout of the room behind the stone wall.

It was probably a wood merchant's warehouse. Almost half of the space inside was left empty, while dry wooden logs were piled up in the other half.

Link then teleported the rest of his party into the warehouse.

Once inside, Link drew out a few spatial runes on the walls in order to set up a Folded Dimension. The area of the already spacious warehouse doubled instantaneously as a result.

"Your Highness, Celine and I will start looking for information outside. Everyone else, stay here."

Link gave a rune stone to King Leon. "If you find yourself in danger, just infuse your

Battle Aura into this rune stone, and I'll be by your side in half a minute."

"I understand." King Leon nodded.

Link then said to his Warriors, "Protect the king at all costs."

"Yes, my lord!" shouted the Warriors in unison.

After leaving enough food and water to last for a month for his men, Link drew another rune on the stone wall. With a soft tap on the rune, a spatial door appeared on the wall. Link and Celine both strode out through the door, leaving the warehouse behind them.

Once outside of the warehouse, worried that Celine had not yet fully recovered, Link asked, "How are you feeling?"

Celine twirled a pistol in her hand and smiled at him. "Never felt better. For some reason, my recovery rate has improved tremendously."

The spirit of the sword spoke to Link in his mind, "Celine's blood has awakened considerably. Take a look at her hair and eyes."

Link did as he was told, and noticed that Celine's hair had become even more lustrous, with a layer of purple dreamlike haze shrouding it. Her eyes had undergone an even more astonishing transformation; her pupils were now a pair of purple, seemingly bottomless whirlpools.

The spirit of the sword added, "She's starting to look more and more like the Soul Dominator."

Link was happy to hear this. He beamed at Celine and patted her head gently, "Good to hear. Let's go, then!"

The fountain square in the old city district was the same as the last time he was in the city two years ago. The only difference was that the wooden buildings that were burned down by Link had been replaced by even more fireproof stone architecture.

As they approached the iron fences of the M13 building, Link cast a Traceless Invisibility Spell on both of them.

Gladstone was a small city, and the strongest scout under the employ of the M13

branch here was no more than Level-5. None of the people inside even noticed them when Link and Celine entered the building.

They made their way to the commander's office on the second floor. Link then knocked on the door.

Save for the sound of someone knocking on the office door, no other sound could be heard from outside the office. The clerks outside continued sifting through the piles of paperwork in front of them, too busy to notice anything strange.

"Who's there?" A gravelly voice came from within the office.

Link pushed open the door and walked straight in, followed by Celine from behind. Once inside the room, Link removed the invisibility spell from both of them, revealing themselves instantly.

"I never said you could come in!" The gravelly voice spoke again, this time with a hint of anger.

Link searched for the source of the voice and saw a middle-aged man sitting at the end of a long table, a long scar running across one side of his face, his eyes cold and piercing. He was busy writing a letter with a quill gripped tightly in one hand.

With a sweep of his keen eyes at the table, Link was able to read what the man was writing. It was a written report to the M13 headquarters concerning the state of the epidemic.

Due to the fact that King Leon had been residing in Ferde all this time, the M13 headquarters had been moved to Scorched City of Ferde.

This meant that the letter would ultimately reach Scorched City.

"Who are you?" The middle-aged man had drawn out his dagger, his face alert and furious.

Link did not want to disclose his identity immediately. He seated himself opposite the man. Gazing at him, he pushed at the air gently in front of him. "Be calm!" said Link assertively.

It was a psychological spell called the Koan of Kund. It was named after a Magician

known as Kund. Under the effect of this spell, all manner of emotion, be it fear, happiness, excitement or anger, would be quelled in the target.

Kund the Magician was said to have invented this spell as a prank. However, as a result of a joke taken too far, one of his friends ended up being sexually dysfunctional.

Under the spell, the M13 commander's eyes widened. All agitation in him had been flushed out, and his voice was now level and calm. "How may I help you?"

Link asked, "There's an epidemic in the city. I need to know the current state of the situation."

Hearing this, he could feel a violent tremble from the man's spirit. His face betrayed a look of horror. "There's nothing good to speak about the situation. You'd best not hear about any of this, trust me."

Link and Celine glanced at each other, sensing that the man was hiding something.

Link said even more firmly, "Tell me."

The man hesitated for a while. Unable to resist the spell's effect, he said, "We've found the altar of an unnamed deity in the city. We believe that it may have something to do with the epidemic. This was our only lead. Our scouts have tried to delve deeper into the matter, but all of them have disappeared without a trace. The ones we've sent as a follow-up have also met the same fate as the others. This is just terrifying. This epidemic must be an act of judgment from the gods!"

"All gone... Are there any survivors?"

"None. We only managed to find one of our Warriors' corpse. His entire body was covered in deep wounds, and his arm had been shoved into his throat when we discovered it. This is beyond my jurisdiction. I need backup, I need stronger Warriors. I need to be quick. News of this should not spread out of the city walls, or else that bloodthirsty butcher in Orida Fortress will have all our heads!" The middle-aged man began rambling, but he had already given all the relevant pieces of information to his interrogator.

Link said, "I'll need the coordinates of this altar."

"The cemetery, at the south of the city. Every night, strange noises are reportedly

heard from its depths. The guards and even their dogs were too afraid to venture any deeper into the place. A couple of kids had gone in there, though, and they came out infected by the disease. They were among the first batch of the infected."

Link now knew everything he needed to know.

Link said to Celine, "Alright, to the cemetery!"

Chapter 479

The Gravekeeper and Blood Runes

After coming out of the MI3 headquarters, it was already a bit dark. Link took out his pocket watch and saw that it was 6:20.

In his memories, Gladstone City should still be lively at this time. Now, there was barely anybody on the street. When the wind blew past the street, and it sounded like a wail. Gladstone was filled with people, but it looked like a ghost town now.

The plague clearly affected the city greatly.

Link and Celine returned to the warehouse where King Leon and the others were hiding. They reported their findings and then continued southward.

The cemetery south of the city was close to Gladstone's garden. It was quite far from the older parts of the city. Link activated the Traceless spell for them both, and they traveled invisibly.

By the time they got to the garden, the streets were even quieter. The people who lived around here were all elites in the upper class of society. They had ways to get news and enough money. Most of them had fled.

Along the way, Link discovered that many homes were already empty. Occasionally, there would be a building with lights—but only one or two lanterns with some old servants looking over their master's beautiful mansion.

Because the streets were empty and unlit, the entire street was dark like a monster with its mouth open, waiting for someone to walk into the trap.

"I can feel great danger hiding here," Celine whispered. "Like we're being watched by a beast."

She gripped both guns in her hands.

Link had one hand on the hilt of the Dragon King's Fury sword. He was still feeding

Dragon Power into it while keeping alert.

He wasn't scared of any beasts. He was just worried this beast would be the Agatha Naga's pet. If there was a pet, there would be a Naga priestess. Link wasn't scared of fighting them, but this was inside the city. If the Nagas were desperate enough, the entire city could be hit by the shockwaves. It would be a disaster.

Link didn't want to have any intense conflicts in the city.

They walked another few hundred feet, and the sky darkened even more. There were many ancient trees here, creating a thick curtain of leaves. There was even thin mist. The temperature started to drop too, making them feel coldness digging into their bones.

"This doesn't feel right at all," Link whispered. "I don't feel the God of Destruction's power in the air, but I feel tiny bits of dark aura."

The aura was very slight. A regular priest wouldn't feel it; it might not even alert a divine spell. Celine didn't feel anything, and even Link could only feel a shred.

But if dark aura was present, it meant a dark force was involved.

There were only two dark forces in the North—the Dark Elves and the scattered demons. The demons had come from another realm and were mostly Warriors. They couldn't plan many sinister things, so the biggest suspicion lay with the Dark Elves.

Celine's mind worked quickly too. "Do you think the Dark Elves would ally with the Agatha Nagas?" she whispered.

Link nodded. "If they have a bit of ambition, they would."

Actually, they'd already teamed up. This was recorded in Travel Magician Aisenis' scroll. However, the scroll's records were mostly general events and updated to half a month ago. Gladstone's event wasn't included, so Link had no way of knowing the details.

At this time, they reached the front gate of the cemetery. The people buried here were of high status, so the architecture was designed well.

There was a stone pillar on either side of the gate, 30 feet tall and two feet wide. The

gate was a metal door with intricate carvings. Not too far behind was a small square. A statue of the God of Light's Sleeping Saint, Alagrian, stood in the center of the square. There was a long candelabrum beside it, lit with soul lamps.

Everyone was gone, and the cemetery wasn't well-maintained, so most soul lamps had extinguished. Only a few flames still remained.

The fog was even thicker in the cemetery; the temperature had dropped more too, seeping into their bones. The wind had mostly stopped, and there was no sound at all. The cemetery was deathly quiet.

Celine had lived in the lively Scorched City this year. Coming to this ghostly place so suddenly—she wasn't used to it. She crept behind Link.

"Let's go in," Link whispered. He focused on the slight dark aura in the air and walked into the depths of the cemetery.

After around 150 feet, Celine pointed at a small cabin beside the path. "Look, there's light. I think the gravekeeper lives there."

Link snapped out of his thoughts and turned. He indeed saw a small cabin and the hazy yellow light that penetrated through the fog.

"Let's take a look."

If it was the gravekeeper, they would get more clues there. Faced with the unknown, any clue was critical.

The cabin wasn't far—only around 90 feet away. The door was closed. Though there was light, no sound came from the cabin.

Getting closer, Link's ears twitched. He heard an odd breathing sound. It was very slow, much slower than a regular person. There was also a slight rattle between the inhale and exhale as if there was phlegm in the lungs.

It was already clear to Link. "There's someone inside, but he already has the plague."

"Oh?" Celine had been hearing about the plague but didn't see anyone with it. She gulped nervously and asked, "Should we still go look?"

"Of course. There's no harm."

Link used the Magician's Hand to open the door. The door creaked open, and the smell of decay attacked their senses.

Then there was an inhuman sound and a figure pounced at Link.

Magician's Hand!

The gravekeeper was completely infected, but he was still weak; he was only at the status of Level-1 Warrior. Link picked him up with a mere Magician's Hand and easily dropped him back into the cabin, despite the gravekeeper's struggles.

Once inside, Link cast another spell: Dark Cage!

This was a minor Level-3 spell he'd learned in his free time. It only needed ten Dragon Power points and was very useful against weaklings.

Buzz. A glowing silver chain cracked softly in the air and wrapped around the victim, immobilizing him.

Then Link and Celine started studying him.

Firstly, this gravekeeper wore a clergyman's robe. He should be at the lowest level of the Light Church. His flesh was highly decayed, but there were no maggots in his wounds. He looked just like a skeleton with a layer of rotting flesh.

Celine didn't want to look anymore. She was holding her nose too; the smell was too much.

Link used a small wind spell, circulating the air inside the room. The smell faded a lot. Then he started investigating the cabin.

The light source was a magic lantern. A small table stood in a corner with some writing tools and notebook. Link's eyes brightened at this, and he walked over to read the notes.

After a while, he realized this was a diary, most likely the gravekeeper's. He'd carefully recorded what happened recently in the cemetery, as well as the changes in his body. The writing stopped seven days ago.

The gravekeeper must have had recording training, and his records were very object. Even his own bodily changes were mostly devoid of personal feelings. He tried his best to objectively record every detail.

Link read carefully. Celine also walked over.

The most valuable entry was from nine days ago.

Some naughty kids came to play hide-and-seek today. They have such a bad upbringing, coming to hide behind the tombstones of the dead. I looked away, and they got lost... A while later, I saw them run out again. They ran so fast. One of them was crying too. I think they were frightened by something. I was curious, so I went to look. There were many runes written in blood on the innermost tombstone. I walked over and felt my body shake. It was like my bones were stung by wasps. It hurt horribly, and I was so frightened. I couldn't look anymore. After running back home, I fell sick... Something evil must have entered my body.

At the end of the entry, the gravekeeper also drew three runes according to his memory.

Link narrowed his eyes immediately. "It's the Blood Runes that the Dark Elves often use. It really is them!"

He looked through the last two entries. They were messier; the man's mind was clearly in a bad state. Though messy, he detailed every change and was very specific.

Reading everything, Link furrowed his brows. "According to this description, it's similar to the Level-3 undead spell 'Undead Rays,' but these people don't have any power auras. The spell must have been modified. Let's go look at these Blood Runes."

Collecting the notebook, Link was about to turn when he felt a premonition. At the same time, he heard wind come from the window, like an arrow or something. Without thinking, he unsheathed the Dragon King's Fury sword and sliced towards the window.

Poof. A dark red tongue covered in decaying liquid was sliced and dropped to the table.

It was still alive and kept wriggling, splattering the liquid. Everything that the liquid touched would sizzle, resulting in a large corroded hole.

At the same time, a sharp scream came from outside. It sounded like a woman's strangled shriek and didn't sound too far away. Link saw a black shadow fly away through the white mist.

Link immediately said to Celine, "Let's go after her. It's the Summoned Hell Beast, Zampo. There must be a summoner nearby!"

Zampo was a realm beast and great at sneaking around. Its scariest attack was its venom and piercing tongue. It was terrifying to the average Warrior, but to Link, it was like a rat against a dragon.

Chapter 480

Power Beyond Comprehension

The Hell Beast Zampo bolted towards the flower garden area outside the cemetery, under the cover of the fog.

Once it started picking up speed, nothing could stop it.

However, this time, its pursuer was more than a match for it.

Link burst out of the cabin and began chasing after it. After no more than three steps, he vaguely sensed the beast's intentions.

It seemed to be trying to lure him away from the cemetery. Knowing this, Link decided to strike first.

He thrust his sword out, a Despair Light Ball forming around its tip. In a flash, the Dragon King's Fury sword appeared 200 feet away, right beside the Zampo.

"Spatial Shackle!"

With a soft hum, a fluid-like ripple began spreading out in the air, instantly trapping the beast like a net. Just then, the beast's body began to turn transparent in an attempt to phase itself out of its restraints.

"Phase Lock: Activate!"

This was a Secret Spell. Its main function was to disrupt dimensional transference and all other magical fields.

In the realm of magic, it was a well-known fact that it was easier to disrupt a spell than to build it from the ground up. Disrupting his opponent's Realm Conversion spell was a simple enough affair for Link, despite not being familiar at all with Realm Magic.

A rune began taking shape from the tip of Dragon King's Fury sword and then impressed itself upon the Zampo's body. With a violent tremble, its translucent body

was pulled back to the physical realm.

At this point, the extra-dimensional creature had nowhere else to run.

Link walked towards it, his eyes not leaving the creature for a second.

It was approximately three feet long and completely covered in mucus. From afar, the creature resembled a giant toad. The only difference was that tentacles sprouted from its entire body. The same sticky fluid dripped from every tentacle and hissed sinisterly as it touched the ground.

"Ew, disgusting! It even smells worse than it looks!" Celine pinched her nose in disgust.

Link walked around the summoned beast and saw a contract rune shimmering through the layer of mucus on its back.

"The nerve to send such an abomination after me!" Link chuckled coldly and gave the rune a tap with his Dragon King's Fury sword. He then infused his Dragon Power into it, tracing back an unseen path in the Void all the way to the Magician who had summoned the beast.

Three seconds later, Link widened his eyes. "Found you!"

The enemy Magician was hiding behind a tree, 800 feet away. He was almost surprised that someone would be bold and dumb enough to hide so close to the action. Link once again thrust his Dragon King's Fury sword out, conjuring three Despair Balls in the air. In an instant, the sword's tip appeared exactly 800 feet away, piercing directly into the Magician's arm.

Once his sword found its mark, Link willed out a spell: Demonic Seal!

With his Dragon Power flowing through the Dragon King's Fury sword, Link began etching out a simple, yet powerful rune formation. The runes began creeping into the Magician's body and then into his bloodstream, effectively blocking off the flow of his power.

Dimensional Jump!

As Link activated Dimensional Jump with his sword, a white light began radiating from the Magician's body.

Now rendered completely powerless, he could only watch on as his body rematerialized in front of Link.

Hum... There was a white light in front of Link. Half a second later, there was a thump on the ground. A Dark Elf in a black robe with silver stripes fell to the ground rather unceremoniously.

The Dark Elf quickly flipped himself over on the ground, trembling furiously as he stared at Link fearfully.

Before, he had felt the presence of someone in the cemetery. Gradually, he sensed that the intruders were more powerful than he could hope to handle. He had summoned the Zampo to lure them out of the cemetery and hid himself far away from the place so as not to be discovered. He did not expect that he would be caught so soon!

The Dark Elf's opponent had an 800-foot casting range and was even capable of forcibly teleporting him to his side.

Exactly how strong was this man?

Link sheathed his sword back into the scabbard. He walked a step forward and swept his gaze across the Dark Elf Magician from head to toe. He then said coldly, "A Level-6 Summoner of the Silver Moon Council. Not bad."

"You... You're Link?" He recognized Link. Stories of his feats had spread far and wide across the Firuman continent alongside his description as a young, black-haired Magician. Among the human race, he was a peerless hero. But among the Dark Elves, he was a butcher who had slaughtered thousands of Dark Elf Warriors, the boogeyman Dark Elf parents told stories about to their children to put them to sleep.

The Dark Elf Magician trembled even more violently.

Link did not reply him. Instead, he asked, "What is the cause behind the city's epidemic? Tell me everything you know. Or else..."

Saying this, he pressed a palm slowly into the air at the Zampo. Dragon Power streamed out from his palm as he began weaving an intricate magic seal in the air. From the seal, an indistinct ripple began extending outwards.

The ripple moved towards the creature inexorably till it finally penetrated its body.

Spatial Rend!

The beast, who was restrained in place by Link's Spatial Shackle, suddenly shivered. A second later, there was a ripping sound from its body. The creature was disintegrated into a cloud of white sand which scattered across the ground.

The Dark Elf recoiled in shock upon seeing this. He was now gulping in irregular breaths of air.

He was more than familiar with the Zampo's power level, and he knew that he would definitely be killed in an instant if the beast had decided to turn on him. However, after seeing with his own eyes the creature being disintegrated into dust so casually by the Magician before him, he felt that his understanding of magic had been completely subverted.

If he was capable of this much bare-handed, would the world itself crumble before him if he held a wand in his hands?

"Still not talking?" Link held a hand before the Dark Elf and began charging up Dragon Power in his palm. Magic runes appeared around his hand one by one, ready to send him off to the same fate as the beast he had summoned.

"I'll talk! I'll talk!" The Dark Elf hugged his head and began screeching pathetically. "I don't know much. I was only sent here to scare people off. The one responsible for the epidemic was Eilos. He was behind everything."

"Eilos? Is he a Dark Elf as well?" Celine asked.

"Yes, he's a Dark Elf. He once served the Spider Queen as her priest. He now worships the God of Destruction. The epidemic was his idea."

"Where is he?" asked Link. He was now getting a clearer picture of the situation.

"I don't know. He had already left early in the morning. He said... He said that the Envoy of Slaughter approaches and that he needs to hurry." The Dark Elf's tone was apprehensive, as if fearing that Link might not like what he had to say.

This was shocking news.

Eilos might be looking to accelerate the spread of the epidemic, and with no cure of

the disease in sight, this may spell a catastrophe unlike any other... Link dared not think further on the subject.

Link took a deep breath and continued his interrogation. "Is there any way to stop this epidemic?"

The Dark Elf shook his head. "I don't know, I'm just a Summoner. Disease Magic isn't really my area. You'd better ask Eilos himself. He's the expert on the subject."

Upon hearing this, a game message popped up before Link's vision.

Mission: Find the source of the epidemic.

Player will receive 100 Omni Points upon completion.

Player will also receive Scapegoat Doll (Legendary).

New Mission Activated: Find Eilos.

Details: Find Eilos, the one who has been behind the plague in the city, and retrieve the cure to the disease from him.

Mission Reward: 15 Jogus.

Link accepted the mission and then looked at the Dark Elf with a smile. "I'm sure you probably have some way of contacting this Eilos person. Tell me now, how can I reach him?"

The Dark Elf shouted, "I don't know... I really don't. We all get our orders from the Agatha Nagas. We simply obey them. There's literally no communication among us Dark Elves. Please don't kill me, I've told you all that I know. Really, that's it!"

Celine whispered to Link, "I think he's telling the truth."

Link nodded. The Travel Magician's scroll had said that the Dark Elves were basically the Nagas' slaves. They had lost all autonomy and now served as the Nagas' pathfinders and kamikaze troops.

If this was all the Dark Elf had to offer him, Link decided that he had outlived his usefulness to him. He drew out his sword in a flash and sheathed it back into its

scabbard.

For a moment, the Dark Elf's body ceased all movement. Then, a bright red line appeared on his forehead, and with a thump, the Dark Elf's head rolled lifelessly to one side.

"Let's go. We'll need to go deeper into the cemetery," said Link.

The fog in the cemetery had thickened. After walking a few hundred feet forward, a large tombstone appeared before them. On the slab of stone, Link could see the bloody runes as described in the cemetery guard's records.

"I sense divine power coming from this place," Celine said softly.

Link nodded. "It's the God of Destruction's power. There's also a bit of Dark Power here. Stay outside the magic circle. I'll take a closer look at the runes myself."

As soon as he stepped within the boundaries of the circle, he could feel a sudden vibration running through him, as if something was trying to pierce through his body. Link shielded himself from this invisible force with his Dragon Power.

"It's Level-7 power. No one in Gladstone could have resisted this level of power. Let's take a look at the runes... As I suspected, the magic circle has the Undead Ray spell as its core, while being surrounded by divine runes. A curious combination indeed. With both Divine Power and Dark Power interlocked with each other so intricately, I fear that removing the influence of both powers from the bodies of the infected without harming any of them may be a far trickier business than I had hoped... I need more information on this spell," said Link.

"Then we'd better look for Eilos, fast," said Celine.

"Guess there's no other way." Link knelt on the ground in the rune circle, intently looking for further clues. Half a minute later, he frowned. "The situation doesn't look too good. Besides Eilos, there's another Agatha Naga involved. From the footprints left on the ground, the Naga doesn't seem to be physically strong. She must be a Naga Priest."

Link stood up. "Let's go, then. Our enemy did not seem to have bothered covering their tracks. We may be able to easily find them."

...

Outside Gladstone City

Around ten shadowy figures had appeared in the woods. One of them was Katyusha, who seemed to be leading the party.

They ran through the dense forest and before long, reached an empty patch of land. There, they found what appeared to be a boat carved out of a single wooden log.

Katyusha approached the boat for a closer look at it and said, "I was right. Link is now in Gladstone. Let's go, we need to smoke him out of the city!"

"Yes, Commander."

The party of Nagas continued on towards Gladstone City in search of Link.

Chapter 481

You're Surrounded!

A river cut through the entire city of Gladstone, running from the old parts in the North to the inner city. It passed by the main citadel, through the garden zone, and finally out the business zone.

Basically, everyone used water from this river.

The Dark Elf and Naga priestess' aura went along this river. It was clear that they planned to poison it.

Celine grew fearful as she walked. "That Dark Elf is honestly so horrible. This way, it won't take long before the entire city is infected."

Link nodded. "They've already left for a day. I can sense very slight Dark aura in the water. It's probably too late to stop the infection. The only solution we have now is to find a way to crack this spell."

It had already been a day, and the aura left behind was very thin. Celine couldn't sense it at all.

She stuck close behind Link. The two walked from the garden zone to the old city and reached the mouth of the river.

"They've left the city. Let's go."

There was a city wall that blocked their path. Link took out the Dragon King's Fury sword and drew some runes in the air. With a light tap, a magic door appeared. The two moved through the wall.

Outside the city, they continued up the river.

At first, there were still some residents outside. After around three miles, the terrain became steeper. A mountain and a waterfall appeared. This waterfall was around 150 feet high. Water fell from the sky, crashing against the rock with a thick spray.

This time, Celine felt the thin Dark aura in the air. "It really is the water!"

Link nodded. He could feel the auras of the Dark Elf and Naga priestess. They were on top of the waterfall.

He gripped Celine's waist and used the Void Walk to fly to the top. There, the terrain was much smoother. Forests grew on either side of the river. The water flowed slowly as well. Three hundred feet forward, the water started turning. Past that, there was another small waterfall of a few dozen feet high. There was a pool of water under it, surrounded by rocks.

Link saw their target on a flat boulder. A Dark Elf and Naga priestess were casting a spell.

A large number of runes hovered around them. The Dark Elf added in Dark power while the Naga used the God of Destruction's power. Both formed a misty belt that extended and mixed above the pool of water, creating a ball of dark red light.

Black liquid from the ball of light dripped into the river.

Link studied the rune matrix and felt for the density of the Dark power in the environment. He quickly concluded, "They've maintained this magic seal for half a day. That's enough time for the magic to seep into the entire underground water system of the city."

In other words, it was possible for all average citizens under Level-4 to be infected right now. This was the absolute majority of Gladstone City.

"Should we act?" Celine held her big fire gun, ready to blow their brains out at any time.

"Wait, I'm recording their magic runes... It'll need five minutes," Link whispered.

These guys were Level-7 and eight. Their lives weren't valuable; Celine could kill them with two bullets. The most important matter now was to find a way to decode this spell and save the citizens of Gladstone.

When a spell was operating, fine ripples would appear in the Mana. A powerful Magician could use these ripples to calculate the spell's theory in reverse.

And Link was that type of Magician!

He was now a Level-11 Magician while the opponents were only using a modified Level-3 Undead Ray. The only difficulty was that the God of Destruction's power was involved but other than that, it was an easy task.

The seconds ticked by. Around three minutes later, Link had an idea. He was clear about the specific way the Undead Ray and the God of Destruction's power were combined.

He realized that it was the God of Destruction's power that made the divine spells ineffective. It wasn't much, but it was heavy in nature, much heavier than the God of Light's power in most divine spells—reaching Level-8. The density of divine power in spells cast by Gladstone's highest bishop was only around Level-5. Even the Battle Priest of the Orida Fortress was only at Level-7. They couldn't get past the Undead spell's protective layer at all.

A bunch of foam could never destroy metal.

It was easy now. If Link raised the density of Light power and supplemented with some magic, he should be able to get rid of this plague.

Thinking of this, Link said to Celine, "Alright, get them."

Celine propped up the big fire gun and adjusted the scope. She aimed with practiced ease and pressed down hard on the magic runes. Poof, a bullet flew out.

A second later, the Naga priestess was hit. A fist-sized hole opened up in her head. She cried out and fell over, ending the plague spell immediately. Her death shocked the Dark Elf greatly. He froze instinctively and then jumped behind the boulder, getting ready to run.

He was honestly in panic and even forgot to activate a defensive spell... Of course, it wouldn't work even if he did.

When he was mid-air, Celine's bullet arrived, digging into his back. Boom. The powerful force threw the Dark Elf 15 feet away, his body snapping in half.

He was totally dead.

"Done!" Celine wiped the metal shards off the muzzle with a clean white cloth. Then she blew on it and put the gun away. "Now what?"

Link already had plans. "Go to the church in the city and find a priest. Only their divine spells can defeat the God of Destruction."

Gladstone's church had many priests. They weren't at high levels, but only they had the divine Light power. Their level didn't matter. Link could create a focus crystal to raise the density of the power.

"Then let's go."

"We'll fly back invisible."

They had to find clues when coming, so they'd been a bit slow. They didn't have that worry now. Link picked Celine up, cast the Traceless and Void Walk spell, and started flying to the church.

The church was between the garden and business zone. It wasn't too far, but it was nighttime. Link couldn't see far, so he didn't fly too quickly.

Around ten minutes later, they landed in the square before the church.

As soon as he landed, something felt off. Link sniffed and gripped his sword. "It smells like fresh blood. Someone has just been killed!"

Shocked, Celine grasped her guns.

Link continued forward, quickly getting to the white stone steps before the church. The bloody smell was heavier here with a chaotic aura mingled within. It was the Naga power.

Stunned, Link quietly unsheathed the Dragon King's Fury sword and continued walking. A few steps later, he found a corpse behind the pillar by the door. It was a young priest around 20 years old. There was a hole in his chest; the fresh blood stood in stark contrast to his white robe.

"It's the Nagas! I can sense the commander's aura. She was here!" Link narrowed his eyes, murderous intent rising within.

The church's door was pushed open to allow a person in. Walking through the crack, Link saw that corpses were strewn across the room.

Regular priests, Holy Knights, bishops, and even the servants had all been killed. No one was spared.

Link and Celine walked over. Every corpse had the same wound—a clear hole. The Nagas liked using spears. They definitely did this.

There weren't many signs of struggle, meaning the Nagas were powerful and the priests had no way of fighting back.

Going through the church, Link searched every room but found no survivors. Corpses were everywhere. The divine objects had all been destroyed too. Even the holy water of the repentance pool was polluted with dark magic.

"The commander guessed my plan and destroyed the source of the solution!"

Only a god's power could counter another god. This was the rule!

The Nagas had killed all light priests in the city. Even if Link found a way to cure the plague, he would have no way of doing so. He could only watch helplessly as the plague rampaged through the city.

With the physiques of the regular people, their bodies and souls would be destroyed by the plague. Even if he got rid of the disease, it was useless.

"Those Nagas are so cruel!" Celine's blood ran cold.

Link sank into deep thought. The priests here were gone, but there were still some at the Orida Fortress and neighboring cities. With Link's speed, he could transport them over.

So they must have just done this offhandedly to create trouble for Link... or even to lure him over.

Thinking of this, Link's heart twitched. If he'd guessed correctly, this place was already surrounded. It was easy to confirm this. They knew he was a Spatial Magician. To trap him, they would lock the surrounding space.

He activated his Dragon Power and cast the Spatial Detection spell to test the spatial frequency.

A red dot of light appeared and exploded like fireworks. One second later, Link confirmed his guess. The space here was completely locked. "We walked into a trap," he whispered to Celine.

As soon as he spoke, a seductive voice rang out. "Link, I've waited for more than an hour."

The black-haired Naga walked in from the entrance.

Link smiled, totally unmoved. "Great, I was looking for you too."

Chapter 482

A Lapse in Judgement

Gladstone City, in the church

If Link was still trapped in space as he had been half a year ago, there was a chance he would not be able to make it out of this. However, things were different now.

He now had at his disposal unlimited Dragon Power and had even mastered the way of the sword. His knowledge of the secrets of magic far surpassed any ordinary Magician at this point. To top it all off, he had even acquired an array of Dragon Spells from the Dragon Valley.

Besides Spatial Magic, the new Link had a few other tricks up his sleeve!

When Katyusha entered the church through its great door, Link sensed the presences of her Naga cohorts behind her.

There were 13 other Nagas, three of whom were Naga Priests. The Naga Priests spread out around the church in a triangle, 200 feet from each other, and began chanting a divine spell to seal up the space within. Two Nagas stood beside each priest to ensure their safety.

As the other nine Nagas were occupied with sealing the area, four remained facing Link and Celine.

"Just you four?" asked Link. "I'm offended."

Katyusha swung the Spear of Victory in her hand. "With this on our side, we are more than a match for the likes of you."

Saying this, she beckoned at the others. "Sisters, let's show this foolish human just what we Agatha Nagas are capable of!"

Just as Katyusha finished speaking, three of the Nagas began taking furtive steps towards Link and Celine in the middle, each of them exuding Level-9 power.

On one side stood a Level-10 master holding a Legendary weapon and three other Level-9 experts.

Facing them on the other side was a Level-11 Spatial Magician with limited Spatial Power, accompanied by Celine, a Level-7 Pinnacle master with Level-9 attack power.

There was also a hidden disadvantage on Link's side: He needed to exercise extra caution while casting some of his more powerful spells. For example, though he may be able to decimate the Nagas surrounding them with a single Void Destructor spell, due to the spell's sheer power, half of the buildings in Gladstone City would be caught in its area of effect. The scorched air, as a result of the spell, would incinerate the rest of the population living in the other half of the city.

Unless he really had no choice, Link would not resort to such drastic measures.

Judging from their current circumstances, it seemed that the Nagas had the upper hand.

The atmosphere was stretched taut in the church. It was as if the air had condensed around them as both sides continued staring at each other, waiting for the other to make the first move.

Half a minute passed, and Katyusha suddenly shot a glance at the Naga behind Link.

"Kill!"

The Naga stretched her mouth wide open till the sides of her mouth almost reached the bottom of her ears. She let out an ear-rending screech, and with an explosion of Destructive Power, she lunged forward, her spear held forth like the tip of a dark red screw. The electricity and wind in her wake split open cracks across the ground like cobwebs. The tip of her spear was aimed not at Link, but at Celine who was standing beside Link.

Celine's attack power was impressive, but she lacked in defensive power. If she were to be taken down first, there would be no one else standing between Link and Katyusha's Spear of Victory.

But Celine had Link.

At that moment, Link cast a spell of his own.

Miracle Aura!

This was the first Legendary defensive spell he had learned from the game system, and he had once used it against Isendilan back in the Golden Plains. It cost 15,000 Mana Points, but now, he needed only 6800 Dragon Power points to cast it.

Its effect also seemed different. A crimson light erupted from Link's body, spraying forth in all directions around him. In an instant, a red, seemingly flimsy barrier had enveloped both Link and Celine.

When the Naga's spear was one foot away from piercing into Celine's back, an invisible force prevented it from going any further.

Sparks flew out from the point of collision between the spear tip and the invisible barrier. No matter how much she tried to drive the spear forward, the weapon refused to move any further.

Despite a mere one-level difference between the Level-9 spear attack and the Level-10 Legendary barrier, the gap in power level was just too great. The spear simply stood no chance in penetrating the shield.

The Miracle Aura also had an added advantage to it: it was capable of blocking all attacks from one side. In other words, she could strike back at her enemies while being impervious to attacks from them.

Celine was more than able to take down a Level-9 Naga by herself within two seconds. However, she knew that the one both of them had to look out for was the black-haired Naga holding the lightning spear in her hands.

Ignoring the attacks of the Naga behind her, she focused all her attention on Katyusha and her spear.

Katyusha noticed immediately that the tables had been turned on her when Link activated the Miracle Aura and nullified all her underling's attacks on Celine. She was now the only one left who could deal any damage to Link and Celine.

She would be left vulnerable to Celine's long-ranged attacks if she were to focus her attacks on Link. If she were to focus on the woman instead, Katyusha would instantly be incinerated by any one of Link's spells.

Katyusha was the one now with her back pushed up against a wall. She let out a sharp scream, but instead of retaliating, she took a few steps back. As she retreated, Katyusha whirled the Spear of Victory in her hands till it was a dense rotating blur, dissuading Link from advancing any further.

Link still had 7000 Dragon Power points. With a recovery rate of 37 points per second, he was still at full strength. He watched Katyusha edging backwards slowly. Instead of going after her, Link turned around at the Naga behind him.

Without casting any of his spells, he drew out the Dragon King's Fury sword and struck back at the Naga.

His swordsmanship had not faltered one bit, as he would take out his sword to practice during his downtime. Even the most basic swordplay could be lethal when performed by a Magician with a Legendary body type.

The Naga who had launched the first strike was still behind Celine, futilely trying to break through her defenses. Link took a step back and swung his sword at the Naga.

Caught off guard, the Naga tried to parry the attack, but her movements were sluggish before Link's eyes. With one swift, silent stroke of his sword, Link sliced through the Naga's throat.

Without even looking at the Naga behind him, he pulled his sword back and charged at the Naga to his left. Though he never mastered Charged, basic swordsmanship had entailed learning basic footwork. Coupled with the explosiveness of his body, Link shot forward in a red blur towards the second Naga. Before she could even react, Link's sword had already struck her.

Seeing Katyusha retreating away from them, Celine aimed her pistol at the third Naga to her right.

She was able to pinpoint her target's position through her acute hearing. Without looking at her target, she fired her pistol.

A soft bang resounded, and a bullet flew out from the magic pistol's barrel. The Naga panicked and tried to dodge the attack. However, the bullet planted itself squarely through her chest, as if she had dodged into it herself.

During the day, Celine had managed to counter the Spear of Victory with her pistols.

After recovering from her exertion, she now felt that her precognitive abilities had grown stronger than before. Before taking her shot just then, without even directly looking at her target, she was able to tell where the Naga would be half a second later. As a result, the Naga crumpled to the ground when she fired her pistol.

In no more than two seconds, all three Level-9 Nagas lay dead on the ground.

The barrier on the two remained unbroken. Both Link and Celine looked at each other, and the message was clear between them: Wipe the Nagas out, teach them a lesson they would never forget!

While not as physically strong as Link, Celine had put herself through rigorous training, and together with her awakened powers, she was capable of fending for herself. She rushed forward, covering at least 30 feet of ground per second. Link did not cast any supplementary magic on her, in case any of his spells somehow interfered with her precognition. He followed closely beside her.

A second later, they were now on the white stone threshold of the church's great door. On one corner of the church square in front of them stood a Naga Priest and her two bodyguards.

Katyusha had retreated to where the Naga Priest stood.

"Quick, destroy his Legendary barrier!" she ordered the Naga Priest. The priest possessed destructive divine power which was the only other thing capable of breaking through Link's Legendary barrier besides Katyusha's Spear of Victory.

What about setting up a seal to prevent Link from escaping?

Be damned with the seal, she thought. Right now, the only thought on her mind was survival.

But she had failed to account for the fact that the Naga Priest was not specialized in combat. Her divine spells were indeed effective against Link's Legendary barrier, but her combat sense and reaction time were far inferior to Link's.

When she began casting a divine spell, the spatial seal was immediately undone. Link saw the opening and thrust his sword out. A Despair Ball appeared in front of the sword's tip, letting it pass through. When it reappeared, it had penetrated through the Naga Priest's forehead.

The Naga Priest's divine spell was forcibly interrupted by a sword thrust from Link.

Shocked, Katyusha pulled the Spear of Victory back, intending to use it on Link. Just then, she turned around and noticed that Celine stood beside Link, staring at her coldly without even moving to attack.

Katyusha remembered the woman all too well. Celine was the one, after all, who had managed to deflect the Spear of Victory with her bullets. She was the shield standing between Link and the Legendary spear that was said to hold sway over destiny itself.

In a moment of misjudgment, Katyusha had failed to account for Link's other Legendary powers besides his spatial magic. One Legendary Warrior was most certainly not enough to defeat Link; she needed at least two or three more by her side to finish the job.

Due to her miscalculations, her Naga minions had all fallen before Link. If she stayed on any longer, she would be killed off as well.

Without a moment's hesitation, Katyusha activated Charge with a burst of Destructive Power and streaked out of the church square, abandoning her underlings behind her.

In her desperation, she had bolted away from the battle at such an incredible speed that she had turned into a blur.

Celine fired her pistol at the fleeing Naga's back. Judging from its trajectory, her bullet would surely hit its target, but the Naga showed no intention of blocking or dodging as she fled for her life.

Celine was stunned by such a bold move. Even if her opponent was a Legendary Warrior, not even a leather armor would be able to stop a Level-9 shot.

All of a sudden, she realized that her bullet's speed was not able to match her opponent's, and would not be able to catch up to her.

"She sure can run fast she wants to!" she said.

Watching how desperately the opponent had fled from him, Link could only smile wryly at the rapidly vanishing silhouette in the distance. He would be able to catch up to Katyusha by himself. What stopped him from doing so was her Spear of Victory. With the Dragon King's Fury sword still far from reaching Boundless Sharpness, his

only other way of countering the spear was his Scapegoat Doll.

While there was a chance he could defeat Katyusha and her spear by himself, it was too risky, and certainly did not allow any room for error. Also, if he were to go off chasing after Katyusha, Celine would be left behind to fend off the remaining Nagas by herself. The eight Nagas remaining were Level-8 and Level-9 adversaries; Celine would surely be overwhelmed by such a number.

After pausing to ponder on this for a while, Link decided not to chase after Katyusha, and turned around to face the Nagas behind him.

Within ten seconds, all eight Nagas, unable to pierce through Link's shield, were slaughtered without any chance of victory.

By that time, Katyusha's figure had already disappeared without a trace in the distance.

Link returned to Celine's side once more and pulled her waist into his arm. He then activated Void Walk and sprang into the sky. Another outbreak was about to happen in Gladstone City, and he was running out of time.

He suddenly remembered that there was a church in another town called Hapsburg 80 miles from Gladstone City where he could probably find all the priests and priestesses he needed to curb the epidemic.

Chapter 483

Let the Hero Fall in the North

Orida Fortress

The fortress army was ready. At daybreak, 20,000 soldiers would depart from the fortress to control the plague in the southern Gladstone City.

The night before they departed, General Abel was frozen on a chair in the corner of his room in the fortress. He grasped his sword and breathed heavily.

Various fantasies of murder flashed past his mind. Like bubbles in boiling water, he couldn't stop them at all. He had no energy to think about the current situation. The only thing he could do was use all his might to control his thoughts and sit in that chair.

After a long while, his emotions were slightly calmed. I'm going to lose control soon. I wonder if Annie has sent the message... If Master Link received it, he'll be on his way to the North. If he comes, what should I do?

Panic set in. This was the fear of the impending judgment. No one could wait for death calmly.

Abel had once read countless epics of heroes. He'd seen countless sacrifices with his own eyes too. He had once thought that it was glorious and brave, but when it was up to him, he felt fear.

What does death feel like? I've killed so many people. Will my soul fall into the abyss to be devoured by countless demons?

A thought came up in his mind. He'd read the Firuman Epics. One of them was about demons. It described the tragic endings of various bloody killers and what would happen to their souls after death, placing emphasis on the horrible state of hell and the Abyss.

Eloan lay in the pit of poisonous snakes, countlessly bitten by them every day. When his flesh is eaten clean, and he is turned into a white skeleton, his flesh grows back the

next day. The snakes come back to continue, and the cycle goes on for an eternity of torment.

This was how Eloan, a tyrant from 700 years ago, suffered in the hell of poisonous snakes. Abel could tell that many details were from the imaginations of the author, but applied to him, he fell into terror.

What if... that was real?

His body trembled as he grasped his sword tightly. The dragon leather around the hilt was cool to the touch. The power surging in his body gave him some sense of security.

But then the image of Link killing the demon army alone reappeared in his mind. Abel now had Legendary power, but after leveling up, he discovered that he could only kill at most 5000 demons in a direct fight. An entire army? That was an unreachable goal.

He is so powerful. I don't have any chance of surviving. Instead of being killed out of punishment, why don't I...

He looked at his sword. This was an Epic sword passed down the Abel family. Named the Lion's Fury, it was an advanced weapon to the average man. But to someone of the Legendary level, it was just like a metal rod.

Supported by his sudden thought, Duke Abel applied some force. He lifted the Lion's Fury and pointed the dark, cold blade towards his neck.

If he moved his sword, all the evil, all struggles, and all pain would be gone with the wind.

"Coward!" someone exclaimed from the corner.

Duke Abel's hand shook. The voice killed all the courage in his heart, and the sword fell down. He looked to the source of the voice. A black shadow appeared—it was the woman who had lured him.

This time, he realized she wasn't alone. There was also a black-haired woman. She stared at him with disdain and sneered. "Molina, is this the killer you mentioned? He looks like a worm to me."

The Naga known as Molina shook her head. "Katyusha, you're wrong. You don't know

the duke. He just hasn't thought it through yet. His thoughts have been restricted by too many mundane values. We must help him break through the restrictions so he can release his great potential."

As Molina spoke, her sharp features softened a lot. Swaying her hips, she walked over to Duke Abel and knelt down. Reaching out, she caressed Abel's face. "Duke, I know you're in pain. You feel tortured, repenting every night. I know I shouldn't have guided you onto this path of blood. But if I was wrong..."

Here, Molina's hand slid down and grasped the duke's sword. Then she ripped her clothes open at the chest. Two pearly breasts sprang out, and the two red dots stole the duke's eyes.

Molina pulled the sword to her chest. The dark sword, snowy white skin, and two tall mountains overlapped, forming a heartrending image.

She looked up at the duke, translucent tears rolling out of her eyes. "If I was wrong, kill me now."

"You..." Duke Abel stared at this woman in disbelief. She had led him astray—this much was indisputable. But she'd also given him much power. Abel hated her but seeing her like this, he felt that he couldn't bring his sword down!

Molina knelt so submissively before Duke Abel and pleaded, "Duke, there are two paths in the world. One is the mortal path. You must always consider everyone's thoughts, consider their actions. You worry that they want your power. The other path is the undying path of gods. If you follow your own heart and go forward, you will become stronger, stronger, and stronger, until you are immortal. Duke, do not hesitate any more. A mortal's life is temporary. The Abel family and the Norton Kingdom will turn to ashes. But if you choose the second path, you will stand for eternity."

Duke Abel was convinced. He was a strong-willed man. If the other used some kind of evil plan to tempt him to fall, his self-esteem wouldn't allow it. He would resist naturally. But now, Molina was begging him and used that type of logic. His inner struggles relaxed greatly.

"But Link is coming. I'm not his match."

Katyusha, who hadn't said anything all this time, burst into laughter. "Ha, I thought you were worried about something. Take this sword. Replace that crappy thing you

have."

She tossed a dark red sword over.

Duke Abel caught it and studied it. The sword was around four feet long and weighed 30 pounds. There were many runes he couldn't understand carved on the body. If the sword was placed somewhere for a while, dark red fog would rise up around it. The fog thickened and many runes started glowing dimly.

He could feel that this was many times better than the Lion's Fury sword.

He gently touched the blade to the Lion's Fury. Cling. The sword was completely unharmed, but the Lion's Fury was chipped.

"Great sword," Duke Abel couldn't help but praise.

"Of course it is," Katyusha said. "Its name is Hero's Dusk and was once a Legendary Assassin's weapon. Take it. When Link comes, Molina and I will help you take care of him. Also, use the fortress' army so he won't dare use wide-ranged attack spells. No matter how powerful he is, he won't be our match."

Duke Abel hesitated again. He could feel that both Molina and this black-haired Naga were both powerful figures. If the three of them teamed up, threatening the lives of the entire army, they should... probably... maybe could defeat Link?

Katyusha lost her patience. "What are you worried about? Are you really a coward?"

Duke Abel finally made his decision. "Then let's do it!"

It was strange. When he went all-out and stopped caring about his family's glory, the fate of the kingdom, and other lofty values or the sins of murder, he instantly felt a long-lost sense of peace.

The chaotic desire to kill disappeared. All that remained was a subtle murderous intent. He could now feel clearly that as long as he wished it, the intent would emerge like a prehistoric beast. It would multiply his combat ability. But when he was calm, it would shrink back, no longer disturbing his rational judgment.

Molina and Katyusha sensed it. They exchanged glances and smiled.

"Congratulations," Molina said. "You've successfully stepped foot upon the undying path."

Katyusha smiled too. "This is how a general should be like."

Duke Abel breathed deeply and grasped the Legendary sword. "Link is a hero. He's the savior of light. He's filled with light, blinding people. He shouldn't exist! Since this sword is called Hero's Dusk, then let this hero die in the North!"

...

The next day, Orida Fortress' army set out. People had expected 20,000 soldiers, but the number doubled, reaching 40,000. All the elites had left. Only 10,000 new soldiers remained in the fortress.

Before leaving, Duke Abel yelled, "Everyone, the plague has started spreading in Gladstone. We do not have a priest's cure or a Magician's fantastical thoughts. We only have the swords in our hands! The priests and Magicians couldn't resolve this plague, but we will resolve it with our swords!"

The army roared in response to their general.

"Go!" Duke Abel pointed his sword in Gladstone's direction and galloped forward on his horse.

...

Gladstone

At dawn, Link brought more than 30 priests from Hapsburg to Gladstone. He worked the entire night and finally completed the Divine Power Focal Crystal. He also hurriedly created a spell to rid the plague with some bishops.

As of now, they didn't know if the spell would be effective. After reaching Gladstone, they went straight to the church.

When the archbishop saw the corpses strewn on the ground, he cried out in pain. "Oh, oh my, these demons!"

Complex emotions filled the eyes of the other priests. There was fear, terror, and

horror.

During this, Link already grabbed a group of people from the streets. They had pale complexions, and their eyes were slightly bloodshot. When they walked, they trembled and breathed heavily. These were symptoms of a deep infection.

"Father, time is short. The plague will erupt soon," Link urged. "Hurry and test the spell's effect!"

Nine out of ten people on the streets of Gladstone were like this. Link could already sense chaos in some corners. He estimated that the plague would erupt in two hours!

Chapter 484

The Melting of the Snow

The sound of a man panting heavily could be heard.

The man whom Link had brought with him had a glazed look on his face. His body swayed about restlessly when he was seated on a chair. Even though he was surrounded by the corpses of fallen priests and fresh blood on the ground, he did not seem at all concerned.

He stared dumbly at nothing in particular, as if the world around him had nothing to do with him whatsoever.

All the priests on the scene were shocked at the sight of him.

"He's close to losing all reason. We need to start treating him now," Link said to the archbishop. With a rush of Dragon Power, Link gently raised a piece of rock from the ground till it reached a foot high and formed a cylindrical platform.

Link then set a white translucent crystal, almost as big as one's head, on the platform.

The crystal was a dodecahedron. There was a transparent layer on its surface, almost an inch thick. Deeper within the crystal, a jumble of runes swirled around like a white fog. One would actually pass out from any attempts to make sense of the swirling motion within.

This was the Divine Power Focal Crystal that Link had spent a whole night sculpting.

The archbishop placed a hand on the left side of the crystal, with Link on the right. Both of them looked at each other, then released a flow of their power into the crystal.

When both powers entered the crystal, milky white on one side and crimson on the other, the runes within began swirling even more quickly. Its color had changed as well; after letting both powers seep through, the entire crystal was now a milky white shade.

Half a second later, there was a soft hum, and a pale red ray of light shone forth from the crystal.

Link already had a Spatial Distortion spell waiting outside the crystal. Once the ray of light hit the distorted space, it would immediately be refracted onto the body of the infected.

The infected man trembled violently, his empty eyes now forced wide open. The man's body shook for 20 seconds, before falling forward to the ground. He lay there, devoid of any sign of life.

The archbishop swallowed, then said nervously, "He's dead."

Their Dispel spell had failed. With the whole city in the grip of the epidemic, if they could not come up with something to deal with it soon, the infected would be left running rampant throughout the city and eventually spilling out across the city borders. The archbishop dared not imagine what would happen later at that point.

Unfazed by this, Link knelt down beside the corpse with one hand holding the Burning Wrath of Heavens. He then proceeded to prod at the infected man's body, scanning for any abnormalities in it.

Half a minute later, he stood up. "I found the reason why the spell didn't work."

The disease had been dispelled in the man's body, but it could not withstand the strain of the two powers clashing in it.

Now, he knew that he only needed to add a healing spell around the Dispel spell. This would mend any damage caused by the clash of powers in the infected person's body.

He went back to the Focal Crystal and began making a few modifications to it.

The archbishop waited patiently on one side, while the other priests began carrying away the bodies of their fallen brethren. Three minutes later, there was a commotion outside the church. Inhuman screams could be heard from it, and in the midst of the pandemonium, someone was calling for help.

Celine rushed out through the great door. A moment later, there was the sound of gunshots from outside. Ten seconds later, Celine came back in, with a few other common folk following behind her in a state of panic.

"How's the situation?" asked the archbishop quietly.

"Some of the people have started showing symptoms and are now randomly biting others in the city," whispered Celine.

The archbishop went pale, then turned to look at Link. Link kept working on the crystal, as if he had not heard a word from their exchange. His hand was radiating off a crimson cloud of light. Bits of it seeped into the crystal like drops of red ink.

Upon closer inspection, the red light spreading across the crystal was actually composed of thin, spidery filaments, each of them manipulating a rune in the crystal with surgical precision.

Five minutes passed, and Link, who had been working on the crystal without moving an inch, finally let out a deep breath. The red light in his hand faded away, and he looked completely exhausted.

Link had been hard at work on the crystal, studying the magic behind it without rest ever since he reached Hapsburg. Even at peak physical condition, maintaining his concentration for ten minutes straight had put a considerable strain on his mental faculties.

Celine was most familiar with Link's physical condition. Seeing the look of exhaustion on his face, she asked with a tone of concern, "Do you want to rest for a bit?"

"I'm alright." Link recollected himself, then said to the archbishop, "There seems to be no problem now."

He swept his gaze across the people who had entered the church. His eyes fell on a middle-aged woman with a dazed expression. "Let's start with her."

At that point, Link did not bother asking for anyone's permission to be used as a guinea pig. He no longer had the time to blame himself for accidentally killing any of his subjects during his experimentations. Right now, Link simply needed to make all the necessary adjustments to his spell till he found an effective cure for the epidemic, no matter how many times he had to fail.

Considering the urgency of the matter at hand, the archbishop did not object to this. He infused his Divine Power into the crystal alongside Link's Dragon Power once more. A ray of dim red light shone out from the combination of both powers in the

crystal.

This time, the ray of light seemed softer than before. A layer of mist could be seen surrounding it as well, as it hit the middle-aged woman.

The lady's body began trembling violently for a long period of time.

As she trembled, all the priests in the church had their eyes fixed on the woman's face, hoping that the spell would work this time.

After about a minute, the woman's trembling began to slow down. Finally, she stopped shaking altogether. Her previously lifeless eyes now came alive. She looked around at her surroundings, perplexed. "What happened? Why am I here?"

Her speech was clear, and the lifelessness on her face from before had disappeared without a trace, as her cheeks were now flushed with life.

The middle-aged man beside her, presumably her husband, shouted with joy, "Mileia, you're cured! This is great news!"

He then turned towards Link and the archbishop, and knelt down on the ground before them with a thump. He said with tears of gratitude, "By the God of Light, my humblest thanks to both of you!"

The archbishop and the other priests let out a collective sigh of relief. They were told that the epidemic in the North was all but incurable, even with their divine spells. When they got here, the nightmarish state of the streets had sent a chill down their spines, and they all feared that there was nothing they could do at that point.

But now, they had finally found a way to purge the city of the disease!

The archbishop looked at Link and said, "Master Link, thank the heavens you're here with us!"

Link too was overjoyed at this, but he knew this was just the beginning. "Alright, now's not the time to celebrate. There's still a lot of people out there who needs our help."

He held out a hand which shone with the same red light, and directed the light once again into the crystal. Seeing this, the archbishop followed suit, and infused his Divine Power into the crystal as well.

Around ten beams of light radiated out of the crystal at the same time, hitting the remaining refugees in the church.

Unlike the middle-aged woman, the other ten people were not as seriously infected. When the beam of light entered their bodies, their bodies trembled as well, though not as violently as before. A young man shook only for a few seconds before returning to normal.

He leapt up in joy, then said, "I feel better than ever!"

"Yeah, me too. My joints don't hurt as much as before," said an old man. This must be a side effect of Link applying his Dragon Power in his treatment.

Though none of them knew the archbishop, they had heard rumors of the Magician known as Link.

Now cured of the disease, every one of them came forward to express their gratitude for curing them.

Of course, Link had no time for any of this. He turned to the archbishop and the other priests behind him. "Let's go, to the church square. There's still many of the infected running rampant in the city. We need to cast the Dispel spell on a larger scale."

The Dispel spell would be used on ordinary folk. On account of the exceedingly low amount of magical toxin in a normal human body, he only needed to expend no more than 0.1 Dragon Power points every time he cast the spell on someone.

The priests were all Level-6. Altogether, they possessed at least 10,000 Divine Power points, which was more than enough to overcome the Level-8 Naga Priest who had been spreading the epidemic. In theory, they could dispel the epidemic completely with their current power level.

Of course, they were on a deadline, as the infected were all scattered throughout the city. To speed up the process, they would need a particular magical technique.

Only Link knew how to go about this.

When everyone finally reached the church square, Link began etching out magical runes across the square. He was using a high-level magical sealing technique.

Dragon Power flowed out from him, and began shaping itself into runes in the air. The runes then hit the ground with a bang, sending bits of dirt flying up. Before long, a magical rune spread out across the ground clear as day. A band of light whirled through it, indicating that the rune was fully charged up.

Three minutes later, a magic seal with a diameter of more than ten feet began taking form across the ground. It activated itself immediately upon completion. Above the seal, a half-transparent silhouette with a diameter of more than a hundred feet hung in the air.

Link threw the Focal Crystal at the silhouette. The crystal dangled in the translucent shape as if caught in an unseen web. An instant later, runes rushed out from the crystal till they completely covered the silhouette in the air.

The silhouette was now a magnified version of the Focal Crystal.

Link shouted, "Priests, concentrate your Divine Power into it!"

Stunned momentarily by this, the priests regained their senses immediately and did as they were told. Link stepped forward and projected his Dragon Power into the silhouette as well.

With the infusion of the two powers, the silhouette gradually grew brighter and brighter till it was almost blinding, as if the sun itself had fallen to the earth.

The priests had all but exhausted most of the Divine Power, and some of them had collapsed to the ground out of exhaustion. Even the archbishop could not bear the strain. He staggered, on the verge of collapse, but was helped up from behind by the people of Gladstone who had been cured by him.

At that point, Link only had 3000 Dragon Power points in him.

"Now!"

Link willed the dazzling ball of light up into the air. He levitated alongside it, and together, both of them flew up 2000 feet into the air before coming to a halt.

Just then, none of them could see where Link was in the air, as he was completely overshadowed by the brilliant ball of light.

The orb of light was overflowing with Divine Power, turning all heads in Gladstone City towards it in the air. 80 miles away on the main road, Duke Abel, Katyusha and Molina, too, felt the power radiating from it.

"Such power!"

They looked at each other with a mix of dread and shock.

Back in Gladstone City, the light orb hovered in the air for a few seconds, then exploded with a bang like fireworks.

Countless beams of red light fell from the sky like a meteor shower. This luminescent rain fell over all of Gladstone City like a blessing from the God of Light.

On the ground, the archbishop and his priests, as well as the people who had been cured back in the church, all knelt on the ground, both hands clasped together in prayer.

"O almighty God of Light, thank you for blessing us with your light. Our most magnanimous God of Light, thank you for gracing us with the presence of the Child of Light!"

Before, the rumor that Link was the God of Light's chosen one never warranted any serious thought from anyone, but now, everyone on the church square believed wholeheartedly that Link, who had blessed them with this miracle, represented the God of Light in human form.

The dim red light bathed the city, and in an instant, like the virgin snow under the sun, the epidemic melted away without a trace.

The archbishop felt it. He whispered, "The snow has melted."

A hundred feet away, Duke Abel and the others felt the sudden change in the air as well. As the Naga Priest, Molina was able to sense it most clearly. She stopped walking, then let out a sigh. "Didn't really think he would be able to dispel the epidemic."

"What do you mean?" Katyusha was shocked.

Duke Abel turned to her as well, waiting for an explanation from her.

Both of them heard Molina perfectly, but her words did not make an ounce of sense to them.

There were over 10,000 people in Gladstone City, and most of the infected were scattered throughout the city. Letting the infection loose among them was a simple affair. All it took was simply introducing the toxin into the water supply of the city.

On the other hand, dispelling this kind of destructive magic was a more troublesome matter.

The caster needed to disperse the combination of Dark Magic Power and Destructive Power from the infected person's body, and shield the body from any resulting damage at the same time.

To cure one person was possible, but curing tens of thousands of people at the same time was just beyond the realm of possibility.

Such a feat was not unlike trying to unravel a heavily jumbled bundle of rope.

"I don't know how he did it. Is this the power of a Legendary Magician?" Molina sighed again.

"What now?" Duke Abel asked. With the epidemic purged, he had lost all justification to slaughter the inhabitants of Gladstone City.

Katyusha chuckled coldly. "Why, we proceed as planned. Only we know the epidemic has been purged, but the soldiers don't. Since you're the marshall here, who's to stop you from doing whatever you want?"

Duke Abel paused at this, then nodded. "Alright, let's move on!"

He was now a faithful servant of the God of Destruction at this point.

Chapter 485

Legendary Battle (1)

Mountain forest

Felina hid behind a big tree and looked at the large mass of soldiers in the distance. After carefully counting the number, she jumped down and whistled. Then she ran towards Gladstone City.

After a while, two companions appeared beside her.

"Did you see? There are two Nagas with Duke Abel," Felina said while running.

"I saw. It seems he's completely fallen."

"This is a disaster."

Felina nodded. "We must tell the duke now."

Another figure jumped down in another direction of the forest. It was Skinorse. He started sprinting deep into the forest while mumbling, "I knew Abel had problems. This guy actually dragged all the soldiers to massacre the city. Holy crap."

After a while, he reached the waterfall where Kanorse and the others were hiding. "Morrigan," he yelled. "Open the door."

After calling three times, the waterfall split open, and Morrigan walked out. He cast a Levitation spell from 150 feet away before Skinorse could jump in. Once inside the cave, he explained everything he'd seen.

Annie was awake by now, though she was still very weak. She was curled up with a blanket in the corner. Hearing Skinorse's news, her expression darkened. Feeling down, she sat in the corner without a sound.

No matter what, Duke Abel was her father. The others couldn't comfort her about this. They could only stay silent with her.

After a long while, Kanorse suddenly asked, "How's the plague in Gladstone?"

"Not sure, but Master Link's there. I'm sure there won't be a problem... Don't look at me like that. I ran around so much, and my legs even got thinner. I need to rest."

Kanorse shook his head. "My injury is already better. I can't just watch the general do this. I must stop him even if I die!"

Duke Abel must have feared Kanorse would stop him last time in Garrason, so he sent Kanorse away. When he returned, the killing was already over.

If he had been present, he definitely wouldn't let the general do that.

Skinorse couldn't understand this. Throwing up his hands, he said in disbelief, "Hey, you're not his match at all. Abel's power is too deep to understand now. I just glanced at him from afar, and he seemed to notice. He looked over at my hiding spot many times. My soul almost flew out in shock. I think that you should just rest up first. It'll be better if you break into Level-9. Then it's possible to defeat him!"

Beside them, Morrigan also urged, "Kanorse, didn't you hear Skinorse? Duke Abel has 40,000 people with him. You're injured. If you go, you'll just waste your life."

Kanorse shook his head. "No, my father was a stable hand for the Abel family. It was the general who gave me the chance to learn martial arts when I was young. If he wants to venture into darkness and murder, he must step past my body."

As he spoke, he walked to the mouth of the cave. "I'm going. Please take care of Princess Annie."

Without waiting for anyone's reply, he jumped out of the cave. After he disappeared, everyone exchanged glances awkwardly.

"He's going to die if he goes. No doubt about it." Skinorse shrugged.

"Not exactly," Morrigan said. "The Ferde lord will be there too, and you said he has King Leon. Maybe he can successfully revoke Duke Abel's military control?"

Moya, who hadn't said a word all this time, suddenly said, "You're wrong. Those 40,000 soldiers aren't to fight against Master Link. The military control is meaningless too. Those soldiers are there to restrict the master's power."

"What do you mean?" Morrigan was just a Level-5 Magician. He didn't really understand a top Magician's power.

"Let me put it like this," Skinorse explained. "At the Orida Fortress, Master Link once used a ranged attack to destroy the Dark Elves and demon army. Each time, he killed more than 30,000 within ten minutes. A mortal is powerless against him. If he tries, the 40,000 soldiers will be obliterated instantly. But he won't do that, obviously. With the soldiers present, Master Link must restrain himself while fighting..."

Morrigan gulped. He was first shaken and then worried. "Holding yourself back in a battle of life or death... According to you, General Abel already has Legendary strength. The black-haired Naga is at the Legendary level too, and the other Naga isn't weak either. How can we fight?"

Skinorse sighed. "I don't know. This is tricky."

The cave fell silent again; the mood was depressing. After a long while, Priest Moya said, "I think we should go too."

Morrigan was the first to disagree. "Are you crazy?" he exclaimed. "This is a fight between Legendary figures. What can we do? We might even distract Master Link."

As soon as he finished, a weak voice came from the corner. It was Annie. "Morrigan, you don't know him. He won't get distracted... If I go, maybe my life will make my father feel a bit of guilt. So, if possible, please bring me over, if only to a close proximity."

"Are you crazy too?" Morrigan really couldn't understand anything that happened today. He'd never seen people fight to die before. A madman had just jumped out of the waterfall. The other madman now wanted to follow him.

But after he spoke, the cave grew quiet. No one answered him; Moya and Skinorse were both deep in thought. A few seconds later, both spoke at the same time.

"You go first," Skinorse said.

So Moya said, "Princess Annie, I'll take you over."

Skinorse arched an eyebrow. "Alright, I was going to say that too."

Morrigan was the only one left. He looked side to side and finally sighed dejectedly. "Great, you're all enthusiastic and hot-blooded, that's wonderful..." Morrigan said sarcastically. "I'll go full-out this time too. I'll go too."

If Master Link lost, General Abel would definitely cause a catastrophe. If he watched his companions sacrifice themselves while he retreated, he would be wrought with guilt later. He wouldn't be able to live happily no matter what.

In that case, he would go now and hide in the distance to look for an opportunity. Maybe both sides would be destroyed and be hanging onto a thread. Then he would come into play. As the saying went, a stalk of hay could break a camel's back. He might be the stalk to defeat Duke Abel.

With that, Skinorse patted his shoulder and chuckled. "I knew you'd go too. Let's go. If we run faster, we can catch up to Kanorse. That guy is too straightforward. If he gets there, he'll just try to block their way. It'll be weird if he doesn't die."

They wanted to help, but they truly weren't strong enough. They must plan well.

...

Whoosh, whoosh. Amidst the sound of wind, Felina and two other Red Dragon Warriors flew towards Gladstone in their dragon forms. Finally, they saw Link on the main road outside the city. He wasn't alone. Other than Celine, King Leon, and some fire gun Warriors, he also had around 30 people dressed as priests.

After curing the plague, the priests of Hapsburg completely revered Link. They didn't wish to leave after hearing about Abel. They wanted to stay and face him together.

"Duke, did you cure the plague?" Felina asked, seeing their relaxed expressions.

"Yes... but Orida Fortress sent the soldiers, right?" Link asked. Seeing Felina's furrowed brows, he knew there was a problem. In the end, Duke Abel couldn't resist the desire to kill. He had probably completely fallen now.

Felina sighed and explained what she'd seen in the forest.

Everyone present listened carefully. Afterwards, Link estimated, "Gladstone is more than 160 miles from the Orida Fortress by road. The army will take at least three days to arrive. During this time, we can hatch a plan."

When they met in three days, the Dragon King's Fury sword would have finished leveling up. By then, he'd have nothing to fear of Katyusha's Spear of Victory.

King Leon was a bit worried. "My brother John has always been the general. He personally enlisted these soldiers. Now that he's become so powerful, he must be reputable amongst them. I'm afraid that if he insists on killing even with the plague cured, the soldiers will still follow his orders."

A general's command must be obeyed. As long as Abel was still the general, the soldiers would obey no matter how bizarre his order was.

Link nodded. "Indeed. Therefore, we cannot just wait here. Let's go intercept them!"

King Leon had another worry. "If we take away John's position, the soldiers would still follow him if he called."

Link thought for a bit and said, "Yes, but that's okay. The Warriors won't dare to fight against me."

He was highly confident in this because he knew he had another name—"army killer." He could destroy an entire demon army; a human army was nothing.

The old soldiers of the Orida Fortress all saw him kill the demon army with their own eyes. When they saw him at the fortress, they would practically fall to their knees. Facing him now, they wouldn't have the courage to fight back.

He knew Abel's plans. The general just wanted to use the soldiers' lives to restrict his power.

Two Legendary figures and a powerful Naga priestess—Katyusha, your Spear of Victory has lost its effect on me. I'd like to see what else you can do!

Chapter 486

Legendary Battle (2)

A newly renovated road branching off the King's Lane lay between Orida Fortress and Gladstone City

During this time, resources were transported through this path to Orida Fortress due to the war in the North. Having undergone repair work, the road was now smooth and approximately 20 feet wide.

Small wooden huts were built along the road, at intervals of 50 miles, for travelers to rest their weary feet. These huts were known by the people of Firuman as rest shacks.

Link and his party were recuperating in one of these rest shacks a hundred miles away from Gladstone City, as they waited patiently for the arrival of the Orida Fortress army.

On the second day, around three in the afternoon, a clear ting sounded in the hut. It was not loud, and still, it carried itself through the air in the rest shack. Everyone turned to where the sound had come from.

The sound had come from Link's sword in his hand. Aside from the sound, there seemed to be nothing odd going on with his sword. Everyone around him assumed that Link had simply flicked a finger at the blade, and so returned to whatever they were doing before.

Only Link knew then that it was the sound of the Dragon King's Fury sword leveling up. He looked at the sword and noticed that its in-game information had changed.

Dragon King's Fury—Flaming Sky—Silent World

Lower Order Legendary

State: Half-sealed.

First effect: Activate the Dragon King's Fury blade by spending 1400 Flawless Dragon Power points. When activated, the caster's power will be magnified by 15 times, and

their speed will be increased eightfold. This state will last for three seconds.

Second effect: All magical power will be increased by 870 percent.

Third effect: The sword will be able to cut through anything with its Boundless Sharpness. (Perfect State)

Fourth effect: All attacks will automatically activate an area-of-effect attack. The range of this secondary attack is 400 feet, and its attack power is equal to 15 percent of the player's attack.

(Note: Only the strongest is worthy of holding me!)

The sword's stats had all been upgraded as it leveled up. It had already surpassed the Burning Wrath of Heavens wand in terms of magical amplification. However, one of the more significant changes to the sword was its Boundless Sharpness. Before, its in-game message was cluttered with explanations of how it could slice through both physical objects and magic. Now, it simply stated that it could cut through anything. There was no telling which was stronger at this point, the Dragon King's Fury sword or the Breakpoint dagger.

Upon the sword's upgrade, Link let go of all concern he had about the final battle.

Half a day went by. At five in the evening, just as the sky began to darken, there was a rush of wind from outside. Felina had returned from her reconnaissance.

Felina entered the hut and reported to Link, "My lord, the army is now setting up camp on the main road ten miles away from here."

Link thought for a while, then said to King Leon who sat beside him, "Your Highness, it is time to act."

King Leon was somewhat startled by this. There was no turning back for any of them at this point. He stood up and said, "Then let's go."

The marksmen and priests had been resting in the shack for two days, and they were all in excellent physical condition. Upon hearing this, they stood up immediately, ready for deployment.

Link began laying out his plan. "Celine, hide in ambush a few thousand feet away from

our point of convergence with the enemy."

Saying this, he gave a red rune stone to her. "This is an Escape Rune. If there's trouble, just break it, and it will teleport you a thousand feet away."

"Understood."

Link then said to the marksmen, "All of you keep your distance from the vanguard at more than 500 feet. Open fire when a confrontation happens. Do not worry about hitting your own in front."

"Yes, my lord."

Next were the priests. Their levels were not as high. However, what they lacked in combat skill, they made up for with their healing prowess. Link said to them, "You are to wait two miles away in the woods. Should we lose our edge, just retreat from there. If we manage to push back at the enemy, you have my permission to come out from the woods and start taking care of the injured."

"Understood," said the archbishop, nodding.

Finally, Link said to King Leon and the other three Red Dragon Warriors, "You four are with me."

King Leon's presence there was essential to Link's plan. On the other hand, the three Red Dragon Warriors were Level-8 Warriors. Their powers should come in handy later.

Once everyone was assigned their roles, Link and his men exited the rest shack and headed off for the enemy camp.

Half an hour later, they finally reached the vicinity of the army. Link gestured at his men, and everyone began marching on.

The sun had sunk completely behind the mountains, and the sky was now a dark canvas dotted with stars. Campfires were lit one after another throughout the enemy camp. From afar, the light was almost imperceptible.

As Link's intention was to revoke Duke Abel's authority, he would be knocking on the front door of the enemy with as much fanfare as possible. He raised the Dragon King's

Fury wand in the air, and then cast a large-scale magic light spell.

A ball of white light with a diameter of around two feet shot forth from the sword's tip into the air. When it reached a few thousand feet in the sky, the ball of light exploded, lighting up the whole place for miles till it was almost as bright as day, as if a second sun was shining down now from the sky.

The whole army was taken aback by the sudden explosion of light.

"Who did that?" shouted some of the military Magicians. Though the magic light spell did not present a serious threat to any one of them, it was a Level-5 spell, and it was even capable of illuminating the area to such an extent. A feat like this was simply incredible.

"Is it an enemy attack?"

"Look, someone's approaching from there!"

"Wow, I've never seen such power!"

Link had appeared before the enemy. He began releasing a bit of his Dragon Power around him, and an almost dazzling crimson aura billowed around him as a result.

One of the Warriors recognized Link as soon as he came up close to the camp. "It's Master Link."

"The Lord of Ferde is here."

"Who's the guy with the crown beside him?"

"Isn't that King Leon? What's going on?"

The unexpected visit by two such important personages had caught everyone off guard, but none of them dared stop either of them in their tracks and simply allowed them to walk on through the camp.

The camp was huge, occupying a total area of around one square mile. The marshall's tent was erected in the middle of the camp. When Link and his entourage arrived in front of the tent, a crowd of people had gathered around him, from Generals to military Magicians and Priests. Numbering at 300, most of them were high-ranking officers of

the army.

This was what Link had wanted.

A small patch of ground lay before the marshall's tent. Duke Abel stood in the tent's entrance, accompanied by two Nagas and ten of their followers.

Upon seeing Link, Marshall Abel stood motionless, a cool smile playing on his face. "If it isn't the Lord of Ferde himself. To what do I owe the honor of such a visit?"

Marshall Abel simply shot a glance at King Leon, pretending not to see him standing beside Link.

Link knew that the marshall was trying to use to his advantage the fact that some of the Warriors in his service did not recognize the King himself. He took a step back and stood behind King Leon. "Actually, I'm only here as part of the royal escort of the king of the Norton Kingdom."

Link's volume was not high, but with the aid of his Dragon Power, he used a special magical technique to amplify his voice. All the Warriors in the camp were able to hear what he had said.

The Warriors of the Orida Fortress all knew in that instant King Leon was in their midst. Duke Abel's intention to keep silent on the king's identity had been foiled without even given a chance.

This sparked an uproar throughout the whole camp in an instant.

Abel's royal family had ruled the northern half of the continent for close to 300 years. Fear and reverence towards the king's authority had since been rooted deeply in the hearts of the people. Some of the generals around them had been exchanging their suspicions with each other. But upon hearing Link's confirmation of the king's identity, all of them fell to the ground in a half-kneel before the king.

Watching them kneel in acknowledgment of his royal authority, King Leon regained some of his confidence, and he began acting out his part as an actual king.

He spoke with a low voice, "The reason for my visit to the North tonight is because of the massacre in Garrason Town."

As he said those words, Link once again cast his spell, amplifying the king's voice all over the camp.

"Never in my life have I dreamt that my subjects would be culled so callously by my own soldiers, and that the one carrying out such bloodshed would be my own brother. Out of the 30,000 inhabitants in the city, more than 20,000 were slaughtered in cold blood, when in actual fact, only 10,000 were affected by the epidemic. Instead of looking for a way to cure the disease, my own brother, a marshall of Orida Fortress and a duke of the Norton Kingdom, had earned himself a reputation as a bloody butcher by killing for sport. Through his actions, he has brought great shame to the Abel family and the whole kingdom."

Finally, King Leon announced with firmness in his voice, "Jon Abel, from now on, you are no longer the marshall of the Norton Kingdom, nor are you a duke. I hereby find you guilty for the slaughter of 4589 people!"

When he finished, the whole place descended into pandemonium.

Out of the 40,000 people in the army, 30,000 of them had not participated in Garrason Town's massacre. When they had first heard about it, they too had thought that the marshall had gone too far. As soon as they heard King Leon's conviction of his own brother, many of them shouted in righteous vehemence, "He's a murderer! He's not fit to lead us!"

Still, some of them remained loyal to the marshall, as they shouted back, "You know nothing! Not even the King does! He's been enjoying himself in the South all this time, oblivious to the dangers we face every day in the North. He's not fit to be our king."

Though they seemed to be in the minority, they were all heated up in righteous anger, ready to explode at the slightest provocation.

The discontent among the Warriors had begun bubbling up to the surface and was now on the verge of exploding!

"Silence!"

A low voice boomed throughout the camp. All excitement among the Warriors died down immediately, as a sudden cloud of lethargy fell on them. At that point, none of them could even muster the energy in them to start a fight among themselves.

It was Link who had cast the Koan of Kund spell on everyone.

With just one spell, the whole army had ceased its uproar!

King Leon, who had fidgeted apprehensively at the chaos around him, was now able to relax a little, and said to his brother, "Well, Jon, what have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing," roared Duke Abel. Even without magic, his voice was loud enough that it could be heard by everyone in the camp.

"I have no need for words. Now's the time to act!"

Duke Abel let out a cruel laugh. "I will slay you now, brother. Lord of Ferde, you too will not escape me. You'll all die, here and now!"

The Generals were all startled upon hearing this. Watching Duke Abel laughing away maniacally, they all believed that the man had gone mad. Even those who had been speaking in favor of the duke's actions had now started to question his sanity.

Duke Abel had announced his intention to commit treason against the Norton Kingdom by executing both King Leon and Link in front of everyone. Since Duke Abel had chosen to oppose the king himself for having revoked his title as marshall, nothing else could be said to help the duke's case.

Though King Leon was never a remarkable military leader, he never acted out of order. During the great war in the North, he was the one who had funneled food and other resources to the army there. Even when Hot Spring City came under attack, King Leon chose not to ask for reinforcements from the North. Now, with Link the Legendary Magician and the Lord of Ferde himself on the king's side, almost no one was willing to stand on Duke Abel's side.

The generals all drew out their swords beside King Leon.

Duke Abel, on the other hand, had no more than 30 followers beside him, which paled in comparison to the number of Warriors on the king's side.

Ignoring the stark gap in power, Duke Abel stared straight at Link and said something that raised a few brows among the Generals. "Link, I have with me 40,000 people. Are you sure you're ready to face me?"

King Leon's speech before had been nothing more than a formality. The only thing that mattered now was the clash between two Legendary masters.

From the duke's point of view, absolute truth belonged only to the victorious!

Chapter 487

Legendary Battle (3)

"They're gonna fight over there!"

On a piece of high land beside the royal avenue, Skinorse squinted through a fine telescope to look at the situation inside the camp.

Kanorse, Annie, Magician Morrigan, and Priest Moya were beside him.

Skinorse looked over to them and reported the situation. "It looks bad. Duke Abel's side is three people while Master Link is alone. He has to protect King Leon and consider the soldiers around them. He's so restricted. How can he fight?"

Anyone with a bit of experience would see this and realize how troublesome it was.

Master Link should either fight with his full power or get out of here and not care about it. If he had to care about it while considering the soldiers, he might die without a corpse.

Hearing this, Kanorse was filled with anxiety. Link was his savior and had once taken an extreme risk to save him from the North. Now, he couldn't help but say, "No, I can't just watch here. I must fight too."

"Me too," Annie said.

She wanted to ask personally. If her father was set on going with those so-called Agatha Nagas, she would give up. As his daughter, she would give her life back to him.

And she would never let Link die!

Kanorse picked Annie and got ready to jump down.

Skinorse hurriedly stopped Kanorse. "Honestly, why are you two so impatient? Isn't Master Link a Spatial Magician? If he's going to lose, he can run!"

"But we can't just sit here and watch." Kanorse's brows were furrowed.

Skinorse sighed deeply. He turned to Moya and Morrigan. "Friends, we should do that now, right?"

Moya nodded. "We can't wait anymore. Let's start."

Morrigan was in pain. "Ah, that's my treasure. Now it's going to be gone."

As he spoke, he took out a white-gold disc, eight inches in diameter, from his spatial bracelet. Runes flowed through the disc. There was also a colorful shine. From the looks of it, it was nothing average.

"I found this from a High Elf tomb. It's called the Revelation Disc. Its one use is to add strong power to someone... We don't have much time. They're going to fight soon so let's start!"

With that, Morrigan pointed his wand at the disc. Mana surged into it, and the colorful shine grew heavier. Priest Moya also walked over. Milky white sacred light emerged from her hands and poured into the disc.

Whoosh. The colorful haze spread to around three feet in diameter. The white-gold disc was almost transparent.

"Skinorse, Princess Annie," Morrigan called. "Hurry and pour in all your power. Don't keep anything back... Kanorse, you don't have to!"

Skinorse and Annie walked over. Their Battle Aura lit up at their hands, and they gripped the disc. Skinorse was a Level-8 Assassin now while Annie was at the pinnacle of Level-7. Though she was weak, her Battle Aura had recovered a lot during these days of rest. When their power entered the disc, the colorful haze shot out to nine feet wide.

Next, Morrigan pushed the shiny side of the disc towards Kanorse and activated a rune. Crack. With a light sound, the disc cracked. First, a web of fissures spread across the surface. Then it broken into shards and finally, into countless dots of light. They melted into the air like ice on a stove.

At the same time, the others used up all their energy and collapsed onto the ground.

Next, the colorful haze in the air contracted. It transformed into a fist-sized ball of rune light. It flew, crashing into Kanorse's chest, and entered his body.

He stumbled back from the hit. One second after he steadied himself, his body started glowing. His eyes especially radiated with shocking light. The others couldn't meet his eyes.

Kanorse looked down at his hands. "I can feel unprecedented strength," he murmured.

Morrigan made a face. "Yes, you are a Level-9 Warrior. The Revelation Disc raises one's power one level. You are now at Level-10 and in the Legendary state. You obviously have unprecedented strength. But my poor treasure..."

Skinorse picked up a pebble and tossed it at Kanorse. "What are you waiting for? The time is limited. You only have five or six minutes. Ah, this weak feeling is scary. I'd spent a night with a Beastwoman when I was young, but even that wasn't this tiring."

Kanorse automatically ignored Skinorse's last sentence and nodded. "I see!"

With that, he turned and jumped down the high land. With another burst of power, he ran 900 feet and shot towards the camp like an arrow.

...

At this time, Duke Abel slowly pulled out his sword. "I call this sword Hero's Dusk," he said darkly. "Link, you are the youngest of a small noble family. You shouldn't have anything, but you somehow broke through your lowly fate and became a Legendary Magician. You're a hero, so I will use this sword against you."

Those who could break through the shackles of fate were all heroes!

As he spoke, Link stepped to the front of King Leon. "Your Majesty," he whispered. "Take the Warriors back."

Duke Abel sneered. "You want to protect my brother? No matter. He is destined to die today. It's just a matter of time."

Link's expression was unchanged. His calmness was difficult for an average man to comprehend. Like a mirror, he could reflect every change in the outside world but wouldn't be affected personally.

This was the effect of fighting with magic for so long.

When King Leon started retreating, he unsheathed the Dragon King's Fury. He was ready.

At the same time, his vision flashed. He knew it was a mission and took a glance. It was telling him to defeat Duke Abel. Skipping the other specifics, he accepted it.

On the other side, Naga priestess Molina started retreating too. Her power was more for reinforcement, so hiding was the best choice. Katyusha walked to Duke Abel's right and prepared to attack Link from another direction.

Link didn't move. He stood firmly like a lifeless statue but created great pressure. Katyusha moved very, very slowly. She feared any misstep would cause Link to explode.

The two sides were in a stalemate. An extreme pressure spread in all directions. The generals, Magicians, priests, and Warriors even further away were all weighed down and couldn't speak. Their only reaction was to keep retreating.

Duke Abel allowed them to retreat. They could only reach 300 feet away while that only took an instant in a Legendary battle.

The seconds ticked by. Each second was terrifying long; each second was truly like a year.

Two seconds later, Link felt something.

Someone was coming. He had Legendary power, was friendly... was familiar... It was Kanorse. Overjoyed, Link started acting without hesitation.

He activated the Miracle Aura.

Its effect reached 1500 feet and could protect everything within it. Once activated, white light swept behind Link like a tidal wave. Instantly, a thin shield appeared on countless Warriors.

A shield also appeared on Kanorse who had just arrived in the proximity.

Across from Link, Katyusha immediately reacted. "Die!" she screamed.

Wielding her spear, she stabbed. The spear shot across the 90 feet between them.

As the spear came, Link's mind shook. He felt targeted.

He knew that reality was definitely different from the game. In the game, Katyusha would only use the Thorn of Fate every two seconds. But in real life, her every stab was probably a Thorn of Fate.

The spear was super-fast. From the move's inception to appearing before Link's eyes, it was less than one-tenth of a second. It was right when Link was casting the other spell so he couldn't use any other spells.

Back in the day, Link would either die or need Celine's help. Now, his Dragon King's Fury could cut through the time between cause and effect.

He twisted to the side and blocked with his sword. Katyusha's Spear of Victory instantly changed according to Link's moves. His sword changed too. Within one-tenth of a second, the two weapons changed 15 times. They were both so fast that they looked illusory.

But one-tenth of a second later, the two collided like fate. During this fight, both sides were at the same level.

Link had a dragon's physique and was at Level-11. Katyusha was a Naga, and physical strength was her attribute too. Though she was slightly weaker, she had the advantage of acting first, so they were tied.

Cling.

An instant later, the sound of the collision finally rang out. Under the sharp scream, an insignificant layer of white light spread out from the collision. After spreading for 15 feet, it had turned into a gust of wind. Sand and pebbles flew; the tents in the camp were all blown away.

If not for Link's Miracle Aura, many people would have died. But with the light enveloping them, no soldier was hurt.

Katyusha was shocked at this. "How is it possible?!"

Behind her, the Naga priestess was dumbfounded too. She'd been casting a spirit spell

to target the gunner who could apparently disturb the Spear of Victory's tracks. But before she could find the gunner, the spear was blocked.

Molina didn't have more time to think though because someone had started attacking her. It was those automatic gunners Link had brought.

Their weapons could shoot from up to 3000 feet away and were hidden within the crowd now. They also had the Miracle Aura's protection. They could send a stream of bullets to Duke Abel's side without any worry.

These bullets were Level-6. Some hit Link's shield but most swept towards Duke Abel's group.

Dozens of Abel's trusted aides were riddled with bullets instantly. Duke Abel couldn't attack either. He was forced to keep blocking the bullets with his sword.

"Dammit!" Molina quickly cast the divine spell Destructive Halo!

Destructive Halo

Divine Spell

Effect: Within the halo's proximity, a destructive shield will appear around all targets marked as friendly, destroying all incoming attacks.

(Note: Replace defenses with attacks!)

As soon as the shield appeared, the bullets lost their effectiveness. When they hit the dark red shield, they turned into flashes of light and were destroyed.

Though the shield could destroy these Level-6 bullets, it wasn't much against Legendary power.

On the other hand, Katyusha was stunned that her spear had failed. Link snatched this moment. He thrust his sword forward, attacking instead of defending.

Just as the sword was about to stab her throat, Katyusha wrenched her spear back at an incredible angle. Clang. She blocked Link's sword.

But even though she blocked it, the difference in strength grew obvious. The Spear of

Victory was pushed back, and her move was distorted.

"I'll help you!" General Abel saw that Katyusha was at a disadvantage and rushed over.

Link was powerful, but he was alone and had concerns. If the three worked together, they could definitely kill him!

But just as he stepped forward, a figure shot out from behind Link. Then there was a blinding white streak of lightning that blocked Duke Abel's path.

Kanorse had arrived!

Chapter 488

Legendary Battle (4)

A streak of lightning lashed out at him all of a sudden. A series of explosions rang out in the air, and the light blinded Duke Abel momentarily.

Then he saw someone unexpected.

"Kanorse?" He was taken aback. He knew that Kanorse had Level-9 power, but the power he was giving off right now was bearing on the Duke with such oppressive weight. His attack power was on the same level as the Duke's.

Kanorse did not stop there. Lunging forward with his sword held in one hand, ready to pierce through Duke Abel's heart, he shouted, "Marshall, I'm here to stop your madness!"

Hearing this, Duke Abel's rage reached a fever pitch in him. "I've had enough of your words! You mortals really are something! Always trying to get to me with your venomous tongue!"

His eyes had turned blood red, as a dark red aura swirled around him like a cyclone. He then swung the Hero's Dusk sword at the bolt of lightning that had come for him.

"Murder is the absolute truth of this world!"

Duke Abel's voice was filled with indescribable savagery. "I'll kill anyone who gets in my way! I'll kill anyone who upsets me! I'll exterminate all life and rain death and destruction upon this world!"

Saying this, he managed to shatter Kanorse's lightning attack and blocked an attack from his magical lightning sword. A tremor then ran through the Duke's sword, threatening to smash Kanorse's weapon to pieces.

However, thanks to the abundance of combat experience he had accumulated over the years, when Kanorse felt the vibration of power from the Duke's sword, he immediately pulled his lightning sword back. He knew that it was no match for the

enemy's weapon. Kanorse was able to do so with such speed; it was as if he was holding not a sword, but a feather in his hand.

Failing to land a hit on his enemy, Duke Abel let out another one of his joyless laughs. He activated the special effect of his Legendary sword: Eternal Dusk!

Kanorse was caught off guard by the activation of the Battle Skill. He sensed that the sky that had been illuminated by the large-scale magic light spell before had now darkened considerably as it turned blood red. His surroundings were instantly transformed into a desert, where he stood alone in the face of thousands of cavalymen charging at him.

Even a lone hero would not last long against such an overwhelming number.

"The sword can even affect my senses?"

Just when it looked as if he was about to be swallowed up by the incoming torrent of horseback soldiers, a beam of light came down from the sky and transformed into a huge hand. The palm of light stretched across the sky for thousands of miles. The whole sky lit up when it appeared. The hand then descended from above, and with a huge thump, crushed all soldiers and horses alike beneath it.

The illusion was dispelled, and Kanorse saw that a magic hand brimming with brilliant white light was holding fast onto the Duke's sword. He also noticed that the sword was half a foot away from piercing through his body.

Link had conjured the magic hand from his wand in one hand, stopping the Duke's sword just in time, while fending off the spear attacks of the Naga with his sword in the other hand.

This was the Titan's Hand, a Flame spell that Link had once used to terrorize the Black Forest. He rarely found the occasion to use it these days, but in his downtime, he had made a few adjustments to it. The scale of the spell had gone down drastically ever since, but the spell's potency had been increased to Level-10.

Also, due to the spell's simple structure, Link was able to casually cast it without much difficulty.

Just like that, he was able to interrupt Duke Abel's Battle skill with it just in the nick of time.

Kanorse saw the opening in front of him and began his counterattack!

Though his sword could not hold a candle to the Duke's, and he had just recovered from his injuries, Kanorse had a talent for combat unlike any other. On the other hand, Duke Abel may have attained Legendary power, but his combat skill did not receive the same upgrade.

Despite wielding a Legendary sword, Duke Abel was only able to fight Kanorse to a standstill.

However, Link and Katyusha's battle had now shown a distinct difference in power between the two. While her combat skill was on par with Link's, Katyusha's overall power had never been a match for his. Her only advantage throughout the whole fight was her Spear of Victory's Thorn of Fate effect. But now that the Thorn of Fate had been rendered useless, she was no longer a foe worthy for Link's full strength.

Link seemed to be casually jabbing at her with his sword, but each strike was aimed at any one of her weak points, and she was forced to either dodge or block his sword in a delicate dance that could spell her death at any moment.

After receiving five jabs of Link's sword, she screamed, "Molina, hurry up and attack!"

Something was off. They had been fighting for more than four seconds. What kind of divine spell had a casting time of more than four seconds?

"I'm being targeted!" Molina's voice rang out tremulously. "It's the sniper; she's got her sights locked on me and is now waiting to strike the minute I lose focus. I sense that her attacks can pierce through my Destructive Barrier!"

Katyusha was speechless. From the corner of her eye, she could see Molina just standing there like a brick.

She felt a chill in her blood. Molina was a Naga Priest capable of casting powerful divine spells. If she had been compromised, what chance did any of them stand to win this fight?

In an act of desperation, she thrust her spear at Link's chest with all her might, discarding all concern for her own safety.

Link simply took a step back to avoid the tip of the spear.

Katyusha then retreated immediately to Molina's side and said, "You stop Link, I'll deal with the sniper!"

Molina nodded. With a burst of destructive Divine Power, she pointed a finger at Link, and directed a divine spell she had already prepared: Frenzy!

Frenzy

Destructive Divine Spell

Description: The target will be sent into a frenzy by the spell and will begin attacking anyone and anything in its vicinity in a blind rage. The spell's duration depends on the target's power level, the longest being a whole day.

(Note: Surrender yourself to madness, mortal!)

The one closest to Link now was Kanorse. Under the effect of the spell, Link would target him naturally. Flanked from both sides, Kanorse would be killed in an instant.

Also, one of the characteristics of the spell was that unlike most other spells, it had a subtler method of activation, and so was especially difficult to interrupt.

Though Link still had the Miracle Aura around him, it was ineffective against this particular divine spell. In an instant, Link felt something taking over his mind, clouding all his senses.

"Not good, it's a psychic divine spell!"

Link reacted in a flash, and activated the Dragon Bloodline Spell: Dragon Soul!

Dragon Soul

Bloodline Spell

Description: The user increases his or her psychic defenses exponentially, depending on the user's own level.

(Note: Burn in the heat of a dragon's soul!)

Upon the activation of the bloodline spell, Link felt a sudden explosion of heat in his

head. The cloud that had settled on his consciousness was in that instant burned away without a trace.

The whole process lasted no more than a second!

When he regained his senses, Link heard a ting from Katyusha's direction. It was one of Celine's bullets that the Naga had managed to deflect.

At that moment, a dark red light radiated from the Naga Priest's body. Behind her, a vortex of dark red feathers sprouted from her back.

Link did not know what kind of divine spell she was about to unleash. What mattered right now, though, was that in that brief moment, no one was keeping him down, and he could now begin casting spells of his own back at the enemy.

He managed to summon a spatial sphere which exploded and sent translucent ripples hurtling through the air. It enveloped Duke Abel, the Naga Priest and Katyusha in its area of effect.

"Spatial shackle!"

All three were momentarily frozen in place. As they all possessed Legendary power, they should be able to break through their spatial restraints in at most a tenth of a second.

But this was more than enough time for Link and Kanorse!

Kanorse immediately seized the opportunity presented to him and stabbed his sword through Duke Abel's chest. A bolt of lightning exploded from the blade, electrocuting the Duke until he dropped to the ground lifelessly on his knees. With a rattle, his sword too fell from his hands to the ground.

On the other side of the battle, Link sent his sword through a Despair Ball, and the sword's tip entered Katyusha's chest, piercing directly into her heart. He then twisted the blade, rending the Naga's heart to pieces. At the same time, his Dragon Power flowed through the blade and began its rampage through her insides.

Unable to even scream, Katyusha simply stood there, a dull look on her face. Her eyes darkened as all life fled away from her.

"Argh!!!"

The Naga Priest managed to break free of Link's Spatial Shackle. She let out a shriek, before grabbing Katyusha's body before it hit the ground. She closed the pair of dark red wings behind her around both of them.

Their bodies then began blurring. They were trying to flee!

Link had no intention of leaving any survivors at this point.

He gave another stab of his sword through a Despair Ball, and the sword's tip immediately pierced through the Naga Priest's back.

Celine's bullet hit her as well at the same time.

It whistled through the air and through the Naga Priest's body, before finally hitting the ground behind her.

The Naga Priest had vanished on the spot before Link's sword, or Celine's bullet managed to hit their mark.

Link frowned. He had never seen such an escape technique before.

He walked over to where the Nagas had vanished and cast three detection spells: Spatial Ripple Detection, Dimensional Detection, and Planar Detection. The three beams of magical light shone over the area, but could not find any spatial abnormalities whatsoever.

The enemy did not use any teleportation spells, nor did they travel to the Isomerism Realm.

The two Agatha Nagas had simply evaporated like morning dew to god knows where.

Link could not make any sense out of their disappearing act.

Chapter 489

Three Pillars of the Realm: Time

Plop. Duke Abel couldn't kneel anymore. He sprawled onto the ground.

He didn't die and was just badly hurt. Kanorse had held back in the last moment, but he was close to death now anyway. In fact, he might be even worse off.

The Naga priestess and Katyusha had escaped, but he remained here to await judgment!

By now, the camp was already turned to ruins by the shockwaves. Link's Miracle Aura was in effect, but it could only protect 1500 feet. The shockwaves traveled past it, and Link couldn't do anything.

In the end, more than 2000 soldiers were hurt. Thankfully, they were only light injuries. A few dozen unlucky souls had died though. After falling, they'd been pierced by sharp objects.

Hapsburg's priests and the army's priests started treating the wounded.

Link walked towards Duke Abel. He picked up the sword and added Dragon Power to check it. Confirming that there were no problems with it, he tossed it to Kanorse. "It's yours."

Kanorse caught it. Brandishing it, his eyes lit up and put the sword away.

"I lost. Kill me now."

Duke Abel struggled a bit and rolled over to face the sky. Kanorse had stabbed his abdomen. There was a bloody hole, and the skin around it was charred by the lightning. However, his vitality was strong, and he just won't die.

Link didn't speak. He pointed the sword tip at Abel's chest and added in Dragon Power. Using a sealing spell, he sealed Abel's power. Then he cast a dragon healing spell to keep him alive.

"Why?" Confusion appeared in Duke Abel's bloodshot eyes.

Link shook his head. "I'm only responsible for taking your power, but I'm not the one to decide your future. That should be King Leon."

As he spoke, he retreated to the side. King Leon walked over with a woman. Her face was pale and covered in tears. It was Princess Annie.

Seeing his daughter, Duke Abel trembled and quickly looked away.

Annie walked to his side. "Are you still my father?" she asked, voice quivering.

Duke Abel shook violently. He covered his face with one hand and waved at Annie with his other. "Go away! I don't deserve to be your father! Go!"

It wasn't his wish for this to happen.

He'd taken the wrong first step and then was lured by the Agatha Nagas. He'd been easily persuaded, mostly because of his mistake at Garrason. There was no way to turn back, and so he was forced to step onto this path of destruction.

Annie's tears were like rain.

King Leon also sighed. He looked to Link and shook his head tersely. It was clear—he didn't wish to kill his own brother.

Even if he was the king, he couldn't make the decision. In the Norton Kingdom now, Link had the power of the final decision. If he said Duke Abel must die, then no one could change that fact.

Link understood this, but he knew even more clearly that though his power to determine one's fate was useful, there was a horrible side effect. Power was always a two-sided blade!

For example, if he killed Duke Abel now, King Leon would become guarded against him. Princess Annie would stay away from him too. Kanorse, who had purposely kept the duke's life, would hold a grudge too. Link would also be known for killing the duke and enter the forefront of the Norton Kingdom's political stage.

This way, Link would lose many allies while also being swept up in the political

whirlpool. He'd run into many troubles.

What would he receive?

He would just get the rush of adrenaline from deciding someone else's fate. Link wasn't too interested in power. The nice feeling wasn't necessary either, so he wouldn't gain anything.

In reality, Link understood his position long ago. He was a protector, not a king, judge, or anything secular like that. This way, he definitely shouldn't take part in these secular matters.

So when King Leon asked him like this, he just bowed slightly and said, "Your Majesty, my duty is to remove the kingdom's threat. Duke Abel has been defeated now and is no longer a threat. My duty is completed."

His message was clear. He wouldn't take part in the duke's trial. If King Leon didn't want to kill his own brother, Link wouldn't interfere. As long as Duke Abel didn't commit any more crimes, he could live out the rest of his life as a wealthy man.

Once Link said that, King Leon trembled slightly. After a few seconds, he understood what Link meant.

He let out a deep sigh. Before this, he'd always thought that Link would someday replace him as the master of the North. Now, it seemed that he'd underestimated this young man.

Link didn't want to become a king in the mortal world. He wanted to become a supernatural saint!

Thinking of Link's past, he had always done this. He'd created the now-flourishing Ferde territory but gave all the authority to a group of average people. Many Ferde citizens only interacted with Lucy. As for Lord Link, he was just a Legendary figure.

He was a protector who could calm the people by just existing.

Duke Abel found this strange too. He'd always thought that Link would kill him. This was also why he'd been so scared and finally started on the path of destruction. He didn't expect this ending.

If he knew this would be so, why would he have been scared? It was just being removed from the general's position! He was tired of the damn fortress long ago.

At this time, the generals who'd retreated crowded over. When King Leon saw that everyone was present, he proclaimed his decision about General Abel.

"I, Leon Abel, patriarch of the Abel family, king of the Norton Kingdom, hereby announce that John Abel is no longer a member of the Lion family. He committed crimes of murder under the deceit of the God of Destruction rather than his own will. Thus, he is absolved of the death penalty. He will be stripped of all power and banished to the South to live his life in captivity!"

For a noble, this punishment was harsh. Though he could live, the rest of his life would be miserable.

Duke Abel exhaled loudly, and his body slumped. He felt a weakness that he'd never felt before. The chaotic energy quickly left him like a tidal wave returning to the sea.

His body changed at a speed visible to the naked eye. His face paled, skin wrinkled, hair whitened, and his powerful muscles shriveled. He aged at least a decade.

Seeing this, Annie cried out in worry.

Link looked over. He checked and said, "The God of Destruction took back his power. He's abandoned. He looks like this because of over-exerting his body and will recover after some rest."

Of course, he couldn't recover completely. After all this, Duke Abel's lifespan was reduced by at least five years.

As he spoke, Link waved at a priest beside him. The man walked over to treat Duke Abel's wounds. When the Light power shone down, his body didn't fight back at all. He'd become a regular senior.

Annie sighed. She wiped her tears and supported her frail father. To her, this was the best result.

Without the destructive power's interference, Duke Abel was completely calmed. He gazed at his daughter's pallor, feeling both guilt and fortune. Tears leaked from the corners of his eyes.

The generals kept mum at this. They'd resented the duke before but couldn't say anything now.

Link saw that King Leon was in grief too. He walked up and reminded quietly, "Your Majesty, the army needs a new general."

This brought King Leon back. He nodded. Thinking a bit, he looked to Kanorse.

Kanorse was known as the Dawn Swordsman, and his reputation in the army was second only to Duke Abel. He was skilled, loyal, and a commoner. He didn't have any family behind him and had a good relationship with Link. He was the best candidate for the new general.

"I want to choose him," King Leon murmured.

Link nodded. "I have no objections."

He could tell that Kanorse was about to enter the Legendary level. At that time, Link would make some powerful equipment for him so his combat ability would multiply. He would become the first human general with Legendary power. With his personality and power, he would definitely turn the Orida Fortress into the first iron fortress of the human race!

"When they return to the Orida Fortress, there should be a grand ceremony," King Leon said.

Link thought for a bit and said, "Yes... Let's set the date for one month later. I will create some magical equipment for the general during this time so nothing similar would happen in the future."

King Leon nodded. He obviously didn't have any objections.

With this settled, only some mundane tasks were left. Link didn't care about it at all. He circled the spot where the Naga priestess had disappeared, occasionally casting some detection spells. He wanted to find clues about their disappearance.

After half an hour, he still had nothing.

Helpless, he asked the sword spirit in his mind, "Do you have any suggestions?"

This is some powerful divine spell, but I've never seen it, and I don't know where it's from. It should belong to a god.

At this time, Celine walked over. "Did you find anything?" she asked.

Link shook his head. "Nothing at all. It's strange."

Celine couldn't do anything either. She wandered around with Link until Link gave up after another half hour.

"Whatever, I'll stop looking. They really escaped!"

If there were some clues, he could still go and kill them. Now, there were no clues at all—not even a shred.

He promised to create equipment for the new general, and so he couldn't waste time here.

"Let's go back to the camp."

The camp was actually still in ruins now, but the weather was nice. The Warriors lit a bonfire and rested under the sky. Link naturally didn't have to worry about a place to stay.

Inside the tent, Link waited for Celine to sleep before checking the mission status.

Mission Complete: Remove Military Power

Evaluation: Perfect

Player receives 200 Omni Points.

Player receives 25 Jogu.

Player receives magic book.

The first two rewards were normal, but the last one excited Link. Time, time. The Spear of Victory uses the power of time. Would the Naga priestess use a divine spell of that sort? Did she use a time spell?

Otherwise, he couldn't explain how they had disappeared without a trace.

Thinking this, Link immediately chose to exchange the rewards.

Clack. A book with a black cover appeared in his hands. A dark gold hourglass was drawn on the center of the cover. Strangely, the hourglass seemed to be real; the sand inside kept flowing.

Link flipped it open and started reading. When he saw the first sentence, he felt like a whole new world was opening up before his eyes.

Chapter 490

We Need More Power

"Time is the ultimate dimensional order that moves only in one direction. To throw it into turmoil would compromise the dimensional fabric."

This was the first sentence written in the prologue of the magic book. It was also the only sentence Link understood, as the rest of the pages were filled with words he could barely grasp.

After flipping through only a third of the book, a splitting headache had set in.

He did not recognize any of the runes or the magical concepts introduced in the book. This could be easily rectified; he could simply take all the time he needed to understand the book's contents. The problem was that each and every one of these logical inferences in the book was extremely complex, to the point that it seemed to have surpassed the boundaries of all human knowledge. It was all written in abstraction in the truest sense of the word.

Link continued poring over its pages till midnight. He knew he had come across a real conundrum. Understanding the whole book would definitely take a great deal of time and effort from him.

Link now had an inkling of where the two Nagas had disappeared off to. He suspected that the enemy had traveled through time and hid themselves in the future.

But just how far into the future did they manage to travel? Would they reappear at the same place that they had disappeared? Link knew none of the answers to these questions.

The fact remained that the two Nagas had escaped his grasp.

"Forget it, I need to rest. Tomorrow, I'll be heading off to the Mage Tower in Orida Fortress and begin working on some magical equipment for Kanorse."

As of now, Kanorse was only equipped with a sterling level set of leather armor and

the magical sword that Link had forged for him, a far cry from Duke Abel's epic level equipment.

Right now, Link felt obligated to support in any way possible the ascension of the next marshall in the North.

A night had passed in silence.

The next day, the army set off for Orida Fortress.

Link had gone off ahead with Celine to Orida Fortress, whereas King Leon and the others had remained with the rest of the army, trudging on slowly towards the same destination.

On the third day of their journey, a dark red light appeared in the middle of the woods, where the army had set up camp before.

At first, the point of light was no bigger than a thumb. It was shaped almost like a pair of bloodshot eyes. They observed their surroundings for a moment as if making sure they were alone. Then, a sudden whoosh sound could be heard, as the ball of light rapidly expanded. Moments later, there was a thump, and the Naga Priest Molina and Katyusha fell from the ball of light and onto the ground.

On the ground, Molina immediately scrambled over to Katyusha and pressed a hand on the gaping wound in her chest. She began chanting a spell. From her hand flowed a continuous stream of dark red light, which then entered Katyusha's body.

Katyusha stared dully at the air in front of her. Her breathing had all but stopped. Her limbs dangled lifelessly from her body, and her skin was sagging so much, it was as if she had been reduced to a skeleton with squishy bags of skin and blood bound to it.

This was the appearance of an Agatha Naga on the verge of death.

But as the power flowed on through her, the skin around the gaping hole on Katyusha's chest began weaving itself together at a speed visible to the naked eye until the wound was completely sealed up. At the same time, her skin began to tauten around her. Ten seconds later, she took in a deep gulp of air. Both her hands clasped tightly around Molina's wrist as her eyes sprang open.

"I'm alive?" Katyusha's voice was weak.

"You almost died." Molina pulled her hand back. She was covered in sweat, and her eyes were dark with exhaustion. The divine spell she had used on Katyusha had depleted almost all of her power.

"What time is it?" Katyusha sat up. She then looked about, searching for her Spear of Victory.

"It's with me." Molina took out the spear and handed it over to her. "We've traveled into the future, three days after our last battle. The human army has already left. I assume they've all returned to Orida Fortress. Our operation has failed."

Katyusha fell silent. She took her spear back and leaned on it as she slowly tried to stand up.

In the dim forest, a breeze blew down from the mountains. Without a sound, Katyusha began whirling the spear in her hand. Her body was still weak, and she could only spin it slowly at first. Gradually, the spear began picking up speed. A few minutes later, she was whirling her spear at her normal speed.

Just then, she tripped on a rock and fell forward on the ground.

The Spear of Victory flew from her hand and clattered on the ground a few feet from her.

Katyusha did not bother getting up. She remained lying face-down on the ground, like a corpse buried shallowly among the fallen leaves.

She had never experienced such defeat ever since she was born!

She lay on the ground for around five minutes without moving. Looking on at this, Molina grew worried and approached her to see if she was alright.

When she got close to her, Molina saw that Katyusha's shoulder was trembling. The sound of stifled sobbing could be heard from Katyusha. Molina walked around her and saw that tears were indeed rolling down her cheeks.

Molina sighed heavily. She understood Katyusha more than anyone else. When she had just entered adulthood, Katyusha was deemed as the most gifted Naga of them all. Their defeat this time had come as a tremendous shock to her.

Molina kept silent and simply remained by Katyusha's side.

Ten minutes later, Katyusha crawled up from the ground and wiped her tears off. She then walked over to pick up her spear. "We were impatient. We left our defenses wide open. If we had slowed down just a bit, Ferde and the Isle of Dawn would have gone to war with each other without our aid."

Molina nodded. "I guess you're right. The emergence of Link would naturally accelerate the rise of the human race, but the High Elves would not have let such a thing happen. There was no need for us to have intervened in this."

Something clicked in Katyusha. "Link is just too powerful. With the Light of Firuman's blessing on him, he must be the Child of the Realm. We are most definitely not a match for him with our current power level. We need to form our own alliances."

Molina laughed at this. She knew that Katyusha had grown even more mature and reasonable after suffering such a defeat. She asked quietly, "What other race would want to ally themselves to us?"

Katyusha counted her fingers. "A lot, actually. On the surface, there's the Lord of the Deep, Nozama himself, the Dark Elves, Morpheus the Shadow Stalker of the South and his Syndicate. Then there are the High Elves, the Beastmen, Dwarves and even the Yabba race who may be willing to form an alliance with us."

"Oh?" Molina was confused. "I can see why the High Elves would ally themselves with us. But the Beastmen live far out in the Golden Plains, the Dwarves have no quarrel with the rest of the world. There are, in fact, friendly with Link, and the Yabba people are under Link's protection. How do we make allies out of any of them?"

Katyusha's reasoning had become even clearer. Her eyes lit up even more. "The rise of the humans will eventually lead to them invading the others for their own profit. As they become more powerful, so too will their greed. They will begin coveting the Dwarves' weapons and the Beastmen's fur and other natural resources. I imagine none of them would find such an outcome desirable. Though the Dwarves and Link are on friendly terms, it is only on a personal basis. The illusion of friendship will not last long when the Dwarves' own interest is at stake. As for the Yabba people, there should be a couple of them who have begun to feel discontent about living under another race. Akensser, the master craftsman, is still within our grasp. He's probably gathered a following in his race by now."

Molina grinned widely at this. "I can't find any fault in your reasoning. Once we get back to the North, we'll bring this up for discussion with Ashali (the highest in command among the Nagas), she'll probably agree with you."

At the mention of Ashali, Katyusha's face darkened instantly. "Maybe, I don't think she likes me that much."

"Don't worry, I'll back you up," said Molina reassuringly. She lifted her head up and looked at the sky. "It's getting dark. We'd best rest for a while. Once it's completely dark, we'll go back quietly to the North."

...

Orida Fortress

Link was still hard at work forging magical equipment. When the exhaustion started to set in, he could either go back to finishing up his book on magical enchantments or practice his sword at the magical arena.

Days had passed, as scouts from the Orida Fortress searched the woods for any sign of Katyusha or Molina, but to no avail. A month later, they simply gave up their search.

In that time, King Leon had remained in Orida Fortress, while Kanorse began familiarizing himself with his duties as the fortress' new marshall. The one who had appointed him as Duke Abel's successor was none other than the depowered Duke Abel himself.

As if trying to make up for his crimes, Duke Abel had been teaching Kanorse how to navigate his duties as a respectable marshall. Though Kanorse was upright in his ways, he was also an intelligent man and picked up what he had learned in no time.

Time passed, and both master and student had grown even more intimate with one another.

In half a month's time, Link managed to complete three pieces of magical equipment: a marshall's ring, a lapel pin, and a belt. All three were Legendary gear. He had even crafted the Hero's Dusk sword, modeling it after the Lion's Fury sword.

There was still half a month away till Kanorse's promotion ceremony. With all that free time, he began focusing all his efforts on writing his book on magical enchantment.

As far the book on time magic, he figured that he still did not have the capacity to fully understand it. He would only be torturing himself if he were to force himself to absorb its contents in one go. He decided to just take it slow.

One day, while he was buried deep in his work, a sound of someone knocking came from outside his door. After psychically identifying his visitor, he put down his pencil and said, "Come in."

The door opened, and Skinorse entered, grinning lazily at him. His hands kept rubbing against each other greedily.

At such a sight, Link knew what he was up to. He picked up three rings placed on his table and threw it to Skinorse. "Take them. You've earned it."

Skinorse caught the rings in the air. He felt them carefully in his hands, and knew that they were no ordinary rings. Each of them contained a Burst spell and a Level-10 Defense spell. Both spells were invaluable to any self-respecting adventurer who wished to live a little longer in the adventuring business.

"Hehe, many thanks. I'll remember to give the other two rings to my friends." Skinorse put away the rings in his pocket, then sat on the other side of the table in front of Link. "Actually, I'm here to show you something."

"Oh, do tell." This piqued Link's curiosity. He knew that Skinorse's slovenly mannerism was just a facade. He could be quite dependable when he wanted to.

"It's like this. Didn't I tell you before that I was exploring some ruins? I found something quite interesting. You won't be able to guess what it's used for."

Saying this, Skinorse took out a silver coin and placed on Link's table.

"It's definitely going to blow you away!" he said.

Chapter 491

Thin Pieces of Time

The coin on the table seemed to be made of silver. One side had a silhouette while the other side was a rose. The edges were very finely made. It was clear that Skinorse had specially cleaned it; it looked as good as new.

Link studied it. He still felt that it was a regular coin. He felt for it and vaguely sensed a strange aura. It was a bit familiar, but he couldn't remember where he'd felt it before.

He was too lazy to think more. "What's it for?" he asked straightforwardly.

"Hehe." Skinorse was proud to stump Link. He took the coin and asked, "Do you think it'll be heads or tails if I toss it?"

How could one guess something that was based on chance?

Link guessed randomly. "Heads."

"Haha, wrong." Skinorse tossed the coin. He didn't try any tricks. Under Link's scrutiny, he couldn't do any tricks even if he wanted to.

Clack. The coin landed on the table. It spun and then showed tails.

"It's luck, right?" Link laughed.

Skinorse grinned. "Hehe, you'll see if it's luck after a few tries. Guess again."

"Heads."

Skinorse tossed the coin again. The result was still tails. Link couldn't believe it. He guessed again but was wrong again.

"I'll toss it myself." He suspected Skinorse's method was a trick. Assassins and thieves had quick hands. He must have practiced some cheating method and came to show off to Link.

Skinorse handed the coin to Link with a grin. "Then toss it, but you have to guess beforehand and say it out loud."

Link nodded. "This time, I'm guessing tails."

He tossed the coin without any manipulation—it was just a casual toss.

Clack. The coin landed. It was heads.

Link was intrigued. This was a bit strange. He tried a few dozen times but was wrong each time.

"Interesting, right? I found this on accident. In the tavern, I used it to win everything off a drunkard, haha." Skinorse's smile was devilish.

Link started thinking. He set up many prerequisites and started experimenting, tossing more than 100 times. He discovered that he would definitely be wrong if he didn't try to manipulate anything.

But if he used the Magician's Hand to disturb it slightly in the air, not even specifically controlling it, the coin would become ineffective. Link's accuracy returned to 50%.

"Interesting, interesting." This piqued Link's curiosity. "This coin is mine now," he said. "What do you want?"

"Aha." Skinorse looked accomplished. Chuckling, he said, "I want a ring. A really pretty ring that girls will like. Of course, the magic can't be weak either. It's best if it's at least a Level-10 Legendary spell."

Link didn't comment. He stared at Skinorse until the man started feeling uncomfortable before saying, "You... are a bit greedy."

"Then it doesn't need to be Legendary. Level-9 is okay too," Skinorse said weakly, shrinking back.

Link couldn't hold it in anymore and laughed out loud. "Which girl do you have your eyes on? Tell me the name, and I'll fulfill your request."

Skinorse scratched his head, feeling a bit embarrassed. "Hehe, you scared me. I'll tell you the truth. That female priest I've been telling you about, you know, I like her."

"Alright, I see. Come back in a week. I'll have it done."

"Thanks."

Skinorse walked away, satisfied. Link started studying the coin. It was honestly strange. He flipped it around but couldn't figure anything out. After a while, he activated the Higgs Force Field.

The silver on the surface of the coin instantly started flowing like water. Finally, it melted away like wax. A thin piece the size of a watermelon seed remained in Link's hand.

The color was strange. It was pure black but not a regular black. This kind of black practically absorbed all light. Link placed it beside the ink on the table. Compared to the thin piece, the black ink somehow looked faded.

Link scanned his table. Nothing in his room was darker than this tiny piece, not even the hole in the corner of the shadowy wall.

He then lit a small light spell beside the piece. Under the silver-white light, the piece was still black as ever. Not illuminated at all, it absorbed all light that shone on it.

This was strange.

Technically, if it was this black and absorbed this much light, the surface should be hot. But when Link touched it, he only felt room temperature.

Link tried a Modifications spell, but it was ineffective. The Higgs Force Field couldn't find anything solid.

Strange... I definitely felt this aura before... Let me think... Link furrowed his brows and pondered. Suddenly, a lightbulb went off. He knew why it was familiar.

He took out a Jogu. The two objects had a similar feel.

The Jogu was white like a Go piece. It was plain; Link never felt anything special about it. However, when placed beside the black piece, the white stone actually started glowing.

The glow was especially strange. It looked like an illusory object constructed by a ball

of white light. Then it turned into a white ribbon. There was no Mana aura at all; it was just a regular object. The white ribbon floated towards the black piece and disappeared bit by bit.

Around three minutes later, the Jogu disappeared just like that. The black piece grew a bit. It was around eight millimeters long before. Now, it was around 8.5 millimeters.

Link touched it to feel its temperature, but it was still the same.

These two things were too strange.

Thinking some more, Link got another idea. He wrapped the black piece with the silver coin, with the rose on one side and the silhouette on the other. He started tossing again.

Link still guessed incorrectly every time. That wasn't what he wanted to test though. He wanted to test the piece's ability to fight disturbances.

After tossing the piece, Link used the Magician's Hand to disturb the fall. He was still wrong each time. He continued, gradually lowering the strength of the Magician's Hand.

By the 300th try, the intensity of the Magician's Hand reached a limit. The black piece could resist the disturbance. Link's next ten predictions were all wrong.

This means that the black piece can resist outside influences. It's just too weak, so it can't resist that much. If I let it absorb another Jogu, will it get stronger?

He did it without hesitation.

After feeding it another Jogu, Link started testing again. Fifty tries later, he confirmed his guess. The black piece had strengthened and was more resistant to outside influences.

This... Link was impressed. If the piece becomes strong enough, would it be able to resist everything, including Legendary disturbances... Wouldn't it become impossible to change it? How does it do this?

Link was sure that this small thing was a product of time laws. However, he didn't understand it at all. Because of that and the powerful potential, Link was extremely

intrigued.

Aisenis collects Jogu. I thought they were just regular pebbles. I never expected it to have such special power. The Spear of Victory from the God of Destruction, the spell that helped the Naga priestess to escape, Elin's prediction spell, and Celine's short-term predictions all involve the power of time.

Link realized that even though the power of time was uncommon, it was not rare. He'd been interacting with it all this time. He'd just never thought deeply about it or put in the effort to study it.

Now, as Link's power grew, not understanding the laws of time became his disadvantage. He felt that he had to learn now.

He had an item to experiment with and a magic book. His learning materials were quite rich.

Link first created the ring for Skinorse. With his current level, the ring was a simple matter. Three hours later, a beautiful Legendary ring was complete.

Then Link flipped open the book again. He studied it for a long while, but he ended up with a huge headache. He wanted to slam his head against the wall!

This stuff was too hard.

After half a day, he'd only read half a page. The entire book was 200 pages. He would really have to work his brain.

Phew, this is a difficult task. I won't be able to understand it quickly. I can't rush it. I guess I'll pretend it's my spatial thesis. Slow and steady.

After that, Link started battling with this book. When he honestly couldn't figure something out, he would change his mind set and do something else, like writing enchantments, practicing swordsmanship, or helping Celine.

Half a month passed in a blink. Link finally understood... one and a half pages. The book became more difficult. Now, whenever he saw the book, he would get a headache.

Finally, Kanorse's titling ceremony arrived, and Link had a reasonable excuse to take a break. He felt like if he kept going, he might want to burn the book.

Chapter 492

The Boatman's Bamboo Raft

In the history of the Norton Kingdom, and maybe even the human race, there had been few marshalls of commoner origin.

Kanorse may be the first marshall to set such a precedent in the Norton Kingdom.

He had also set another even more stellar precedent: in the last 3000 years of human history, Kanorse was the first Legendary Warrior who had been promoted to Marshall through sheer talent and hard work.

He had reached Legendary three days ago. Before, there were the royal generals in the army who had objected to his promotion. As he was now a Legendary Warrior, all objections to it had been quelled.

Link was not surprised by this. Even though he had sealed up the dimensional crack with a rune formation, Firuman's Mana saturation had been steadily increasing till it had now reached its late-game stage.

Under these circumstances, talented individuals would surely surpass the Legendary State all across the continent. Kanorse was but the first of such individuals.

In the fortress, Kanorse stood motionless in his room. His attendants bustled about him as they fitted the marshall's standard black-gold battle armor on him. On the surface, Kanorse seemed extremely calm.

But inside, he could feel his heart palpitating violently, sending out vibrations across the rest of his body.

He had never thought such a day would come.

Orida Fortress was the first mountain pass to the north of all human nations. To be promoted to the fortress' marshall essentially meant that he now stood on the pinnacle of all human Warriors.

The attendants had finished putting on every part of the battle armor on his body. In front of Kanorse stood a full-length mirror. A tall Warrior stood in the mirror, clad in a full black-gold set of battle armor furnished with runes all over.

The Warrior in the mirror had an air of power and grandeur about him, like one of those heroes from legends of ancient times.

Looking at his reflection, Kanorse drifted off into a reverie, as he recalled something from his childhood years.

He had been the son of a horsekeeper.

When he was young, he had helped his father feed the horses, and clean up their stables. He had helped groom these magnificent battle horses every day. Yet, he never had the chance to ride on them once, as he was still not qualified to do so.

He had seen the royal elders clad in their splendid garments coming in and out of the Abel family's royal palace. He had always enjoyed the sight of the knights following behind them and dreamt about one day wearing their brilliant armors and exquisite swords.

Of course, this was all wishful thinking.

His father had told him from time to time, "Kanorse, horsekeeping is the family business. If you wish to lead a more stable life, don't start chasing rainbows."

Kanorse was only 13 years old when his father passed away. He thought he would be stuck in the palace as a replacement for his father, when one day, he met Duke Abel.

"This kid looks strong," the duke had said to him.

At the time, the duke was recruiting a large number of youths of the same age as Kanorse to form his own entourage of bodyguards. Kanorse, too, was selected for training. Kanorse could still remember clearly the first time he had brandished a sword, the first time he had sweated out a storm over his body, the first time he was injured, all on his journey to become a magnificent Warrior.

Now, he had done it, and the result had surpassed all his expectations.

With a soft snap, a brilliant red cape was clasped onto his shoulders. His attendants

then softly said, "Marshall, it's time."

Kanorse nodded. He saw the Legendary Warrior in the mirror had nodded at the same time as he did. Dad, are you looking at this now? I'm no longer a simple horsekeeper, he thought to himself.

He turned towards the door and walked out into the corridor. His attendants led the way in front of him until they arrived at the entrance of the fortress' great hall.

The great hall had been decorated splendidly. A red carpet had been laid out on the ground, while the four walls were hung with battle flags adorned with the head of a lion. The soldiers of the fortress too had put on their most brilliant armors for the occasion.

When Kanorse arrived at the great door, all eyes were immediately on him.

In an instant, all the generals gave him the standard military salute. From the dais, King Leon and the Lord of Ferde nodded at him with a smile.

In that moment, Kanorse's chest swelled up with pride.

This was the ultimate goal of every Warrior.

He walked slowly through the great hall until he reached King Leon. He then half-knelt before him, knowing that this was the last time he would be doing so before the king. As marshal later on, he simply needed to bow before the king.

King Leon placed a hand on Kanorse's head and asked, "Kanorse, what is your duty?"

"To protect the North and drive out the darkness!"

"Which precepts do you abide by?"

"Compassion, loyalty and glory."

King Leon then spoke, "From this moment forth, you are now the lion of the Norton Kingdom, the highest commanding officer of Orida Fortress."

When he finished, King Leon held the Hero's Dusk sword that Link had modified in both hands. The sword was rechristened the Lion's Pride, but as of now, it would be

known as the marshall's standard sword.

Kanorse took a deep breath, ready to accept the sword.

Flashes of light came from the crowd behind them, as some of the Magicians took out their Memory Crystals to record the moment.

The Legendary Warrior Kanorse was the most dazzling among them all, followed by the king. As for the Lord of Ferde, Link had completely blended with the crowd, an inconspicuous figure in the background.

This was not at all what the military Magicians had wanted. In truth, they had wanted to make Link stand out even more in their Memory Crystals, being the most powerful person in the kingdom. But it was no use; Link had simply faded into the background in the images that they had taken.

His existence was completely ignored by everyone else.

After handing the sword to Kanorse, King Leon proceeded to give him the lapel pin, ring, and belt that Link had forged for the new marshall.

Kanorse put them on one after the other. When he finished, an indescribable black-golden aura radiated from his armor, adding an indistinct, almost mystical quality to his features.

Kanorse felt a sudden vibration in his spirit, as all the excitement and fear fled from him without a trace. His mind had attained a state of calmness he had never felt before, as if there was nothing in this world that could frighten him.

This must be the Spiritual Protection that Master Link was talking about, he thought. Truly awesome.

He tried to search for Link among the crowd, but noticed that the Legendary master, whose actions could supposedly determine the kingdom's fate, had already reached the great hall's entrance. Link felt Kanorse's eyes on him and turned to give him a knowing smile. His figure began fading away until he finally vanished into thin air.

Kanorse sighed inwardly. He had once read a passage from a book written 800 years ago by a wise king.

The king had written that the kingdom was like a bamboo raft, and time a flowing river. A wise boatman should not try to alter the course of the raft. Whenever a submerged rock appeared in the flow of the river, he should extend the bamboo pole in his hand and give the rock a light push, subtly maneuvering the raft around it and letting it float on down the river.

Kanorse felt that Link was that wise boatman, and the people of the Norton Kingdom were the passengers on his bamboo raft.

He said to himself, "Thank you, God of Light, for bestowing upon us the presence of such a wise man."

...

Once the ceremony had ended, Kanorse was officially promoted to marshall. To top it all off, he was now a Legendary master equipped with the finest gear.

With him presiding over Orida Fortress, there should be no further problems in the northern region.

Link returned to the Mage Tower to pack his things up, ready to head for the South.

The Yabba airship had arrived. with Merlin still as its pilot. Link, Celine, the priests from Hapsburg as well as some of the marksmen had all boarded the airship.

"My lord, are we ready for takeoff?" asked Merlin.

"Not yet, King Leon's still not with us," said Link.

Around ten minutes later, King Leon had arrived, with Kanorse, Duke Abel and Princess Annie beside him.

King Leon and Duke Abel both waved back at Kanorse and Princess Annie as they ascended the gangplank.

When both Abel brothers had gotten on board, the airship began taking off.

In that time, Link never once made an appearance. Princess Annie seemed visibly disappointed by this, while Kanorse tried to console her. Link smiled to himself as he looked on at the scene below him.

After a while in the air, King Leon shot a few glances at Link, as if wanting to say something to him.

"Your Highness, is something the matter?"

"Jon would like to stay at Ferde," said King Leon with an awkward smile.

Since they were brothers, and considering Duke Abel had no chance of regaining his former power, King Leon had intended that he be kept under house arrest. The duke would still be able to enjoy the luxuries of his royal life as before.

Link knew what he meant, and smiled at him. "I'll have a garden villa built for him in Ferde."

"Many thanks," said the king cheerfully. He then continued speaking, "There is one other thing... I... I'm thinking about rebuilding Hot Springs City."

As a king, he felt that he should not live the rest of his life in Ferde. Before, he did not understand what Link's intentions were, and so did not dare make such a demand to him, fearing that it might have him killed. Now, knowing what his intentions were, the king felt that Link would surely agree to rebuild the city with him.

More importantly, with Link's support, King Leon felt that he would be able to receive help from the other lords of the kingdom in the form of manpower and capital.

Link thought for a while, then nodded. "Your Highness, I'll support your decision. You'll need to discuss the details of your plan with Supervisor Lucy first, though."

Even as king, there were a lot of procedures to adhere to, and Link had no intention of seeing them through on his behalf.

Hearing this, King Leon was pleased that Hot Springs City could now be rebuilt, but somewhat annoyed that he had to deal with Lucy. Nothing good ever came from their dealings with each other.

After flying for five hours without much fuss, Link and the others finally reached Ferde.

Beyond his magical research, Link never concerned himself with other things. His time was split between reading the time magic book, writing his magical enchantment books, and sword practice.

The time magic book was extremely hard to digest. He gave it to Alloa, the Maiden of Truth, who had accepted it like it was gold, and read through its pages for three days and three nights straight. On the fourth day, she vomited actual blood out of overexertion. Link immediately took the book back from her.

In the end, Alloa only managed to understand the first few pages of the book.

In a blink of an eye, a month had passed by.

One day, as Link wrestled mentally with the time magic book, he suddenly sensed the presence of an impressive amount of light energy in his domain.

Someone had appeared in Ferde. The energy belonged to the Legendary Light Magician he had met back in Dragon Valley!

Chapter 493

From an Ant to a Dragon!

Link activated the Dimensional Jump and arrived at a tavern in Scorched City. He saw a gray-robed elder at a small table in the corner. There was a small plate of food and two cups of gold absinthe. He was drinking by himself.

After seeing Link, the man smiled. "Come, come drink with me."

Link was wearing regular clothing and didn't worry about getting recognized. He sat across from the elder and sipped from a cup. Then he said, "When we separated at the Dragon Valley, you said you were going to deal with the Dark Magician. Did he cause any trouble?"

The elder sighed and drank some more alcohol. "Yes, quite troublesome. I feel that I can't do it myself so I thought of you."

"Tell me." Link snapped his fingers at a server and motioned with his hands. This was a signal that only regulars at the tavern knew. It meant that he wanted a specialty of marinated beef, sauce, and a bottle of secret Ferde fire wine.

The server seemed to figure out Link's identity and quickly went to prepare the order.

The elder stopped drinking his absinthe. He placed a black pebble on the table and pushed it to Link with his finger. "Do you recognize this?"

The black pebble was round and smooth. It looked like a black Go piece and didn't have any aura. Other than the color, it was identical to the Jogu that Link had been collecting.

He picked it up and sensed carefully. He instantly felt a hidden aura similar to Jogus. Furrowing his brow, he asked, "Is it a Black Spirit?"

In the game, the Black Spirit and White Jogu existed opposite each other. Players of the Light camp collected Jogu to exchange for what they wanted from Travel Magicians. The Dark side also had a similar currency—the Black Spirit.

After a player killed a high-level member of the Dark side, they could also receive this. After giving it to Aisenis, they could exchange it for half the White Jogus.

The Light Magician nodded and smiled. "I didn't expect you to know."

At that moment, the server brought over the dish and alcohol. Link poured a cup for himself and said, "Fire wine and marinated beef is a specialty of Scorched Ridge, especially in the wet winter. Your entire body warms up with one sip. Try it."

The Light Magician did so and chuckled. "These scammers. I told them to give me the local specialties, and they gave me absinthe and fried fish. Compared to yours, I can't even stomach mine anymore."

Link laughed. "I've always wanted to know your name and that Dark Magician. Can I know?"

"Of course, it's not some big secret. My name is Halino, and he's Eugene. We've fought for almost 600 years. You don't know how annoying Eugene is. My only wish in life is to imprison him and spend the rest of my life watching him!"

As he spoke, Light Magician Halino put away the Black Spirit and continued, "The recent event has something to do with Black Spirits. Eugene found Morpheus and had a secret exchange with him. After that, Eugene started collecting Black Spirits everywhere. I don't know what he's planning, but I know it can't be anything good. Morpheus is worrying too. After the exchange, he started constructing realm portals. I secretly investigated for the target of the portal and realized it led to the Delou Ethereal Realm. Eugene must have given him the coordinates."

Etherials were a type of spirit. They couldn't exist independently in the Firuman realm and had to have a host.

The host could be a human or a beast. After becoming a host, the organism would receive the Ethereal's abilities. The cost was that their vitality would endlessly be corroded. They would lose control of their mind and completely become the Ethereal's puppet.

Ethereal Warriors appeared in the mid-period of the game. It was when the Norton Kingdom was struggling against the Dark Army in the North.

The Syndicate created a powerful Ethereal Warrior army because they were usually

extremely powerful and had unique law powers. With this army, Shadow Stalker Morpheus quickly took all power in the Southern Merchant Alliance and prepared to rule over the South.

This wasn't a bad thing at first. In the beginning, Morpheus had teamed up with the Dark Army and killed every human he saw. The relationship with Nozama, Lord of the Deep, quickly soured. He even planned on establishing an army of five kingdoms to help the Norton Kingdom fight against the Dark Army.

The problem was that Morpheus completely over-estimated his control over the Ethereal Warriors!

These powerful Warriors quickly broke free from his control and poured into Firuman. They took over tens of thousands of organisms. The once-gentle hosting turned cruel too.

The Ethereals corroded their hosts' souls to take over their body. It soon turned into a catastrophe in the South.

The Syndicate had no time to care about the others. Even Morpheus was heavily injured by Ethereal Warriors and had to escape. He hid in his turf and didn't dare appear. This was how the storyline quest of the Shadow Stalker happened.

The player would kill Morpheus and go south to fight with the Ethereal Warriors. By the time they poured in their efforts and chased away the Ethereals, the five kingdoms were practically all in ruins.

Of course, this was what happened in the game. Seeing that Morpheus was going to repeat the mistake, Link felt screwed. He'd already changed history so much. Why did the events of the game have to come back?

Despite being a Level-11 Legendary Magician now, Link still felt troubled against these Ethereal Warriors. These creatures weren't that powerful—they were mostly around Level-8 or nine, rarely going past Level-10.

But they had tons of tricks and some really fatal talents. In the game, countless independent Legendary players died at their hands. Ethereal Warriors had another nickname—Legendary Killers!

Thinking of all this, Link sighed. "I read about the Delou Ethereals in a book before.

They're an ambitious group. Morpheus wants to use their power. Isn't he scared of drawing fire onto himself?"

Halino shook his head. "I don't know about that. Maybe he has some kind of method of control. He's Level-19, after all, and also has some divine knowledge. His power isn't something we can comprehend."

"Morpheus is just a parvenu." Link drank some wine, his expression one of disdain.

Link didn't get this information from the game; he discovered it from the dragon library. Morpheus was originally a robber and liked adventures. He was Level-9 at his peak. But after a trip to a relic, he luckily found a piece of Godhead.

And then he hit a goldmine!

Halino obviously agreed with Link. Chuckling, he said, "So Morpheus isn't that threatening. Eugene is the one who's actually a threat. To be honest, Eugene is Level-13, and he is a true genius. He also loves taking risks. He doesn't care about mortal lives. I'm truly worried about what he can do."

Level-13. Link's heart jumped. This strength was indeed a bit scary. Morpheus was even stronger than Bryant. In Link's knowledge, all shocking events from the past millennium all had traces of this Dark Magician.

After thinking carefully, Link said, "I'm afraid I can't help you. I'm not his match either."

In regard to absolute power, Link was Level-11 and nowhere near Eugene. Of course, no one could be completely sure about the winner in a battle of life or death. Every Legendary Magician had their own killer skill. They all feared each other.

"No, you underestimate yourself. In Firuman, you are number one in spatial laws. If we work together, Eugene won't be able to escape," Halino said.

But Link shook his head. "No, no, no. Eugene is a very dangerous figure, but he has his own morals. If I don't fight him, he won't come find trouble with me. But if I do, my territory will be threatened. He might even destroy it, so I can't do it."

He had no conflicts with Eugene. Ruining his plans for no reason would make him hate Link. He wasn't scared for himself. At most, they would just fight to the death.

But he had a territory and Celine. He could escape, but Ferde would become Eugene's target for revenge.

Here, Link drank some fire wine and said, "Compared to that, I'm more worried about Morpheus summoning the Ethereals. He doesn't understand how horrible the Ethereals can be and his methods are crude. I can feel that he will ultimately lose control of the Ethereals."

Hearing this, Halino looked unsatisfied. "Are you sure?"

"Yes." Link nodded.

"What a pity." Halino took out a runestone. "Contact me if you change your mind."

At their point, all words were spoken after careful consideration. No one would nag and try to persuade someone else. Other than souring a relationship, it was useless.

"I will." Link nodded and took the runestone.

Halino stood up and bowed. "Thank you for your hospitality, Ferde lord."

He retreated into the shadowy corner and disappeared. Link remained at the table. He drank by himself and plotted.

Morpheus summoning the Ethereals was truly troublesome. That guy did this near his turf and was an undefeated Level-19 Magician. He had the absolute advantage. If Link just went to stop him, it would be suicide. He would definitely be squashed.

The other was too strong. He was halfway into godly territory. Even if Link called some of his Legendary friends, he still wouldn't be a match.

Thinking some more, Link couldn't figure out a good way against Morpheus. He could just leave it to the side for now and continue watching the South. When Morpheus was hurt by the Ethereals' betrayal, he would reach out and take care of things.

He couldn't just not do anything during this time though.

Humans are too weak while the upper limit of power in Firuman is too high. Some powerful and ambitious person will always show up and cause a disaster. My plan for spreading my Dragon Power... I can't delay it any further.

For an ant, a slight breeze could be the end of the world. Humans were the ants now.

First, they had the Dark Army, and then, the God of Destruction. Now, Morpheus was summoning Ethereal Warriors in the South, and Dark Magician Eugene was stirring up more trouble. How could Link take care of everything alone?

Since ants have difficulty surviving, I'll turn the ants into dragons!

Magical races like the High Elves were so powerful that no one dared to mess with them. The Isle of Dawn had been as peaceful as heaven for 3000 years. The High Elves could do it, so why couldn't the humans? They weren't any stupider.

Thinking of this, Link emptied his cup and threw down a gold coin. As he left, he was already thinking about how to create the seed of Dragon Power.

Chapter 494

The Construction of the Golden Rune

Link saw the half-elf, Eliard on his way back to the Mage Tower.

He too was walking towards the Mage Tower with a bald, middle-aged man, whom Link recognized as Vance, as he approached them. Both men seemed to be in a fierce debate with each other about something as they walked side by side, gesturing wildly in the air as if about to start a fight with each other in the middle of the street.

They suddenly stopped by a brick wall and began scribbling out magical formulas on it with a piece of chalk in their hands.

They bickered on while scribbling on the wall. Finally, Link heard Eliard declare loudly, "My idea is faultless. If you don't believe me, why don't we ask Link himself?"

"Have it your way!" Vance replied angrily. "I've been studying magic for 800 years. I know a lost cause when I see one!"

"So tell me, how exactly is my idea a lost cause?" Eliard's face was red with anger.

Sensing that a fight was about to happen between them, Link immediately rushed forward. "What's going on?" What are you two fighting about?"

Upon seeing him, Vance said, "You've arrived just in time, Link. Eliard's saying he's come up with an enchantment method that simply uses Mana itself to construct a rune formation and provide a stable form of enchantment directly to magical equipment without the use of any magical material. I just don't think such a thing is possible."

Link immediately understood what was going on.

The tried-and-true method for enchanting magical equipment had always been through the fusion of magical materials to form a rune formation, before setting it on a magically resistant base in order to stabilize the resulting magical gear.

However, what Eliard was proposing was not at all wrong. In fact, Link had been using

such high-level enchantment magic all this time.

After thinking for a while, he raised a finger and began drawing out a rune formation with his Dragon Power. The runes then interlaced with each other in an intricate fashion until finally, a bright red ring was formed in the air.

Link then severed the Dragon Power connection between the ring and his finger. The ring did not vanish; instead, it was hovering steadily in the air.

He flicked a finger gently at the ring. With a ting, it bounced towards Vance from where it floated.

"It is possible to craft magical equipment from pure Mana. It's just that to accomplish such a feat, one needs to have at least a Level-10 power saturation."

Vance caught the ring in his hand. Feeling its warmth carefully, he narrowed his eyes at it and noticed a smooth stream of runes flowing through it. The ring was crafted with such elegance that Vance just could not bring himself to let it go.

He breathed in awe, "To think such magic exists in this world... just brilliant! It doesn't mean that I'm wrong, though. Something like this is just impossible for anyone below Legendary level."

Eliard took the ring from Vance's hand and exclaimed, "Such beautiful workmanship. It's like a miracle from the gods."

Link suddenly remembered something as they marveled at the enchanted ring. He smiled and said to them, "Come, let's go to the Mage Tower. I have something to discuss with the two of you."

Link was already a Legendary Magician from whom the world of magic virtually held no secrets at this point. Both Eliard and Vance gave Link a strange look, wondering how they could be of any help to someone like him.

When the three of them arrived at the library on the third floor of the Mage Tower, Link brought out four magic books titled Principles of Enchantment, Basic Enchantment, Intermediate Enchantment, and Advanced Enchantment.

The books were written by Link during his free time. As of now, he had completed four of them, which would be enough to be used in a course on magical enchantments.

"Take a look."

Eliard and Vance each took a book from Link. One of them a Level-7 Pinnacle Magician, the other a Level-8 Magician; both of them were extremely proficient in the mystic arts. As they flipped through their books, their eyes lit up, and they were both immediately immersed in them.

The book Eliard was holding was Principles of Enchantment. After reading through it for about ten minutes, he began singing praises about it. "A really good book, this one. It's already resolved some of the problems I've been mulling over for a while now. No, no, far from it, I've never seen some of the techniques introduced here..."

Vance was reading the copy of Advanced Enchantment. He was staring at an enchantment technique for about 20 minutes. When he finished reading, he let out a sigh. "Link, you certainly have a gift for magical enchantment."

Link was pleased to have his work receive such praise. He smiled. "It's like this. Ferde currently relies on the exportation of mineral resources as its main source of income. I don't think it would be a viable solution to our financial troubles in the long run. As an alternative, I've been meaning to open up an enchantment workshop that processes all kinds of magical materials and magical gear for export. What do you think about this?"

Bold and adventurous as ever, Eliard clapped his hands and exclaimed, "A great idea!"

On the other hand, Vance frowned at this, and asked, "The High Elves are now responsible for the production of more than 80% of the magical equipment being sold throughout Firuman. They've practically monopolized the production of higher-level magical equipment as well. We'll probably face some fierce competition from them if we were to take a cut from their market now. You should know, Link, those pointy-eared fellows aren't exactly known for playing nice with others."

He had lived for 800 years and was more than familiar with the ways of the High Elves.

Knowing little to nothing about the High Elves himself, Eliard asked strangely, "We're just here trying to make an honest living by making our own magical wares. Why would they want to pick a bone with us? They could just outcompete us by improving the quality of their own production."

Vance shook his head. "Young man, things in Firuman aren't as simple as you make

them out to be."

"Will they be so bold as to burn down our workshop?" asked Eliard, frowning.

"No, they would probably resort to something far more subtle and insidious. I fear that Link would be in grave danger."

Eliard looked at Vance in disbelief. "Danger? Would the High Elves send someone over to kill him?"

Though he was familiar with just how hostile the High Elves could be, both races were allies, after all.

Shouldn't there be a line somewhere that both parties knew not to cross? Eliard thought.

Eliard had heard only the barest details of the matter with Bryant from Link. But after hearing such a thing from Vance, he suddenly felt a chill in his veins.

He suddenly remembered the night Bryant had dropped in for a visit. From the words he had spoken that night, he knew that the High Elf had not just come by for a cup of tea.

Still, he dared not rush to conclusions and turned to Link for answers.

Link nodded, confirming what Vance had just said. "Vance speaks the truth. In fact, the High Elves had come looking for trouble with me twice in the past, and during those two occasions, Bryant had personally come knocking on my front door... But the matter's been resolved, so there's really no need for you to worry about it."

Vance still seemed worried. He knitted his brows together and sighed. "For 3000 years, my people had many opportunities for a revival, only to have them taken away without mercy by the High Elves. I have borne witness to such misfortune twice in my life. This time... I fear this time may not be as simple."

Eliard furrowed his brows even more. He was naturally so good-looking that even a deep frown failed to tarnish his good looks. Any young woman looking in his direction would have instantly fallen in love with him.

In truth, Eliard was not short on suitresses. There were more than 20 women

currently vying for his attention, that is, if he had made any serious effort to count them. However, Eliard had no time to spare for any of them, as the only lady he was hopelessly infatuated with right now was magic.

Eliard had no idea that there was such strife among the races of Firuman. He suddenly remembered how his High Elf father had gone back to the Isle of Dawn on his own after impregnating his mother. His mother had brought him up by herself, until she fell ill and passed on when Eliard was only at the tender age of seven years old.

"Eliard, live your life as you see fit. Become stronger, so that you can go back and tell your father that he was wrong for leaving us!" These were his mother's dying words. Even though he was only seven years old then, those words remained fresh in his mind.

Eliard had lived by those words to this day, struggling on to empower himself with magic.

He had hated his father as a child, but now, upon the realization of the High Elves' true nature, his heart burned even more with hatred for them.

"Oh, the disgrace to have High Elf blood flowing through me!" he spat out acidly.

Seeing the agitation on Eliard's face, Link quickly changed the subject and smiled at them. "Alright Vance, let's stop talking about this. It's ruining the moment. I'm planning to open a magic workshop, are any of you free to help me out here?"

Without a moment's hesitation, Vance replied, "Of course, I'm available. Eliard has a bright future ahead of him. I can't trouble him with something as tedious as this. Let the doddering old fool here be of some assistance to you, Link."

Eliard ruminated on this for a moment, then nodded. He said, "The workshop will need a lot of manpower. It's a great way out for other Magicians with limited talent. Link, I'll open up a class to help you cultivate all the talent that you need."

Link chuckled. "Then it's settled. Oh, right, the workshop needs a name. Do you have a good name for it?"

Vance shook his head. "I'm not very good at naming things."

Eliard thought for a moment, then said, "Why not call it the Golden Rune?"

Link was satisfied with the name. "Then the Golden Rune it shall be. We'll also need to design a unique label for it... How about the soaring bird mark that I usually use?"

None of them objected to this. Link's soaring bird mark was renowned throughout all of Firuman.

The three of them then began discussing the finer details of the magic workshop for the whole day.

Link had planned on writing two other books: Master Enchantment and Legendary Enchantment, but they would only be available to the core Magicians of Ferde's Mage Tower.

When they were finally done with their discussion, Link said to the others, "I'll leave the workshop to your capable hands. As for me, I'll need to start preparing for the High Elves' forces."

Eliard and Vance looked at each other, then nodded furiously at Link.

Vance was especially excited about this. He felt, deep down, that maybe this time, the human race may indeed have the chance to rise up once more.

Chapter 495

Obstacle of Dragon Biases

Dragon Power was a very special kind of power. Even though Link had the Heart of the Dragon and had been studying the book *Dragon*, he still had a long way to go to understand the basic nature of the power.

But even if he didn't understand it, he could still let regular people have the power. Link already had this idea. He prepared to start with the dragonification magic.

The dragons had an entire set of methods to turn a human into a regular dragon. In the game, there were also Dragon Warriors and Magicians. The Red Dragon Queen had also shown Link dragonification potion without side effects.

It shouldn't be hard, Link thought.

But despite that, he still didn't have a deep understanding of it, so he didn't know what to do. That was okay though. He could ask experts.

There was an expert right in Ferde—Red Dragon Elder Pettalong.

Link called him over and expressed his wishes.

Pettalong listened patiently, his face not betraying any emotions. When Link was done, he shook his head briskly. "No, this can't do. Nothing like this has ever happened in our history. There's no precedent! Furthermore, how can the dragon race's power be spread amongst regular humans?"

"Dragons and humans are from the same source. Why not?" Link frowned.

"Duke, that's true, but in actuality, we are very different from humans. After tens of thousands of years, humans have interbred with different races, such as elves, Beastmen, Yabbas, and even the lizard people of the southern swamps. Humans are like a melting pot while the dragon bloodline is pure. Our blood is still the noble blood of our ancestors. The difference is like a pure mountain spring and the polluted swamp water. It is a difference in nature!"

Pettalong said this naturally as if it was something all dragons believed in. Link was a bit angry at this. The elder was right, but there was no class in blood.

For example, the Shadow Walker, Morpheus, was just a regular human. He was lucky to receive a piece of Godhead and instantly became a Level-19 Legendary figure. No one in the entire realm could defeat him. You could say that he wasn't noble and he would grind you into dust if he was annoyed. In his eyes, what meaning did being noble hold?

To Link, the difference between noble and lowly was just a shallow title the powerful created to support their privileges.

Thinking of this, Link's voice became cold as he said, "So my blood is a melting pot too?"

Pettalong nodded reflexively. "Yes..."

But mid-sentence, he felt something was wrong. He looked up at Link and saw the man's narrowed eyes with a glint flashing past. The elder trembled and quickly waved his hands. "Duke, that's not what I mean. You are different. Your blood is mixed, but you've already broken free from the mundane fate. The impurities of your blood have been removed. Right now, you are the pure and noble dragon duke!"

Hmph. Link vented the dissatisfaction he felt, and after a moment, he collected his fury. He knew that it was useless to go against Pettalong. At most, he could only use his Legendary authority to convince Pettalong, but it wasn't genuine or meaningful.

Pettalong's attitude alerted Link too. The other dragon elders would probably react similarly and reject the idea instinctively.

Looking at the cautious but still insistent Pettalong, Link thought, Seems that I've oversimplified things. I cannot break the dragon tradition. I need some tricks to achieve my goal.

Thinking a bit, Link changed his tactic. He began persuading Pettalong from the dragon race's perspective.

"Pettalong," he continued, "I have my own considerations. Look, us dragons are few in numbers now. There are less than 500 true Red Dragon Warriors while Firuman is filled with disasters. Before the shadow of Nozama could fade, the God of Destruction

came. If we send our own Warriors into battle whenever something happens, won't we become extinct in a few years?"

Hearing this, Pettalong's expression faltered a bit. Link was right, but it still felt wrong.

"Right now, there are 20 million humans and is the most populated race in Firuman. They have the same ancestors as us too. If we choose some talented youths and train them into successful Dragon Warriors or Magicians, they can be a great help to us."

"This..." Pettalong furrowed his brows in deep thought. To be honest, Link's idea was nice. The continent was indeed in danger now; Pettalong was scared too.

But it just felt wrong. He'd been against this at first. Now, Link changed his explanation, and he couldn't find anything to disagree with. It seemed that he'd been persuaded. But how could he?

Seeing him like this, Link grinned. "So you agree?"

But Pettalong was still an experienced guy who'd lived for almost 3000 years. Even though he couldn't figure it out quickly, he still reflexively gave a neutral answer. "Your explanation is correct, but I am not well-versed in dragonification. I know there are many side effects. Why don't you ask Her Majesty?"

He couldn't refute Link, so he passed this problem to the queen.

To Link, this was already a good result. He could persuade Pettalong with this logic so he could persuade the other elders too. He didn't need them to agree; acquiescing in silence was good enough. When everything was on track, and the dragon war chariots were rumbling, it would be too late to stop!

Link chuckled. "Sure, I was planning on visiting the Dragon Valley. I'll go ask her opinion right now."

Without waiting for Pettalong's reply, white light flashed around Link, and he disappeared from the Mage Tower, reappearing on the field outside. Celine was there, practicing her shooting. Link explained where he was going and cast the Void Walk, hurrying over to the Dragon Valley.

His speed was extreme. At thousands of feet per second, almost 2000 miles per hour, he was three times faster than the wind.

The Dragon Valley was in the westernmost region of Firuman while Ferde was the easternmost. There were thousands of miles in between, but with Link's speed, he arrived at the Korora Mountain Range within three hours.

Here, Link went to check the realm crack first.

The center of the crack was located in the mountains in the South. There were runestones around it and many dragons guarding it. There were three Red Dragon Elders responsible for it and more than 50 pureblood Warriors, hundreds of flying dragons, and ground dragons. It was heavily guarded.

Link didn't collect his aura. When he reached the outside of the crack, a young flying dragon walked over. "Duke," he greeted respectfully.

Link nodded. "I'm here to check the runestones around the crack. Please lead the way."

"Yes, Duke."

The dragon turned in the sky and started flying towards the closest runestone. Link followed slowly.

From the air, one could see that the mountains in the distance glowed with a semicircle shield. It was at least 1000 feet high. The Mana inside the shield was abnormally dense, flowing like water, but not a bit leaked out because of the spatial barrier.

Link looked with squinted eyes. He could guess the Mana density from the outer texture of the Mana. It was probably five times higher than Firuman right now. The limit was 500 times. Once the density reached 500 times the norm, the spatial barrier wouldn't be able to withstand the huge pressure. At that time, a horrible Mana storm would sweep through the Korora Mountain Range. The Mana density of the entire mountain range would probably double. The entire Firuman continent would be affected as well.

Link estimated that it would take at least 13.5 years to go from five times to 500. This was a bit slower than he'd expected. This was good news.

The two now reached one runestone.

This runestone was hidden inside a sturdy obelisk. It was surrounded with a huge magic shield that could block all spells under Level-12. No mortal could ever approach

it.

Of course, it wasn't guarded against Link.

When he neared the obelisk, many dragon Warriors saluted to Link. He returned them and asked the Red Dragon Elder who stayed here, "Has there been anything abnormal?"

The elder nodded. "Yes. Half a month ago, a Void Beast appeared inside the shield. It tried to break through the spatial barrier but failed in the end. Look here, the runestone even cracked due to this. Her Majesty has fixed it though."

Link was shocked. He looked in the direction the elder pointed and saw some visible cracks in the previously smooth runestone. There were many new runes too. It looked like it'd been patched up. From the way the runes were made, they were definitely from the Red Dragon Queen's hand.

Then he looked to the spatial barrier in the distance. He could see that the space inside had completely collapsed. It was practically connected to the Sea of Void. It couldn't guard against Void creatures.

Link circled the runestone and walked towards the spatial barrier, feeling carefully for the status of the consolidated space. He grew worried.

This was unexpected. Not only did the Void Beast crack the runestone, but it also created undetectable ripples in the stagnated air around the spatial barrier. And this was only a regular creature. If a stronger one came or if the God of Destruction discovered this barrier's existence, he could definitely break through. That would be a problem.

The spatial barrier isn't a long-term solution. I must quickly find a way to mend the crack.

Link couldn't do anything better now though. He could only try his best in fortifying the barrier. He circled these runestones and fortified them one by one.

He was now much better at spatial magic than the Red Dragon Queen. After repairing them, not only was the spatial barrier completely repaired, it was also stronger than before as well.

But if he wanted to stop something at the level of the God of Destruction, it was still not enough. He had to think of another plan.

After finishing the fortification, Link gave the elders some advice and continued flying towards the Dragon Valley.

As he flew, he thought about the spatial barrier. Everything is possible. The spatial barrier isn't completely safe and might accidentally be broken someday. At that time, some Void Beast will definitely burst free. They're all above the Legendary level, and these dragons aren't their match. Only the queen can stop them, but she's only one person. What if something like the Void Tyrant comes? That would be horrible.

Thinking of this, Link realized that there were too few Legendary figures of Firuman. At most, there were only around ten right now. Less than five could be counted as allies, and all had their own duties. For example, Kanorse had to stay in the North to clean out the demons in the Black Forest. He couldn't leave at all.

After thinking, Link's eyes brightened. We don't have enough people, so we'll use material power. The spatial barrier isn't safe, but it restricts the way Void creatures can enter Firuman. They can only crawl out from there. If there's an extremely strong magic array around the runestones, it can definitely kill all these guys while they're still crawling out.

Sometimes, there wasn't enough manpower, but wisdom was boundless, especially in destructive magic. It wasn't hard to create a horrible attack.

Of course, there would be a huge cost to operate the magic array too.

Link had been studying magic all this time and never relaxed. He'd received Lucia Silverstar's notes and the book, Dragon. He also studied the time magic book. Though he was far from understanding it all, his understanding of the laws had improved a lot. If he could work with the Red Dragon Queen, creating a powerful magic array around the spatial barrier wouldn't be hard.

The spatial barrier is related to the dragon race's security. If I can create a fortifying method, Gretel would owe me. Then if I ask her to help me research Dragon Power seeds, she won't be able to refuse... Right, I won't mention it first. When everything is done, I'll find a chance to mention it so she won't feel antipathy.

Thinking through the entire process, Link made up his mind.

After flying for a while, the Mist Maze appeared. Link passed through it with practiced ease. After ten minutes in the Dragon Valley, the Dragon Temple was before his eyes.

The Warriors who saw him all saluted from afar. Link sensed the Red Dragon Queen's position and finally found her in the Creation Hall.

The Creation Hall, simply, was an enchantment workshop. It was where the dragons created magical items.

The queen wasn't alone in the hall. There were more than 20 Dragon Magicians over Level-8. There was also a scroll more than 10 feet in length and width spread out on the table in the center. It was covered in runes.

Link scanned it and immediately understood the general significance of the runes. It seems that the Red Dragon Queen has already started preparing.

Gretel had already thought of what he'd thought of and had already put the plan in motion.

Chapter 496

You're All Dismissed!

In the Creation Hall

Gretel did not join in the discussion on the magic seal with the other Dragon Magicians. She sat in one corner of the great hall, her eyes fixated on a book before her.

The Dragon Magicians seated around the long table of the great hall seemed to be stuck on a problem. Amid their frustrated grunts and sighs as they struggled to solve the problem in hand, the magic seal etched on the scroll before them had yet to make any noticeable progress.

It seemed as though the magic seal's construction was not going smoothly.

When Link arrived at the entrance, Gretel was still so focused on her book that she did not notice him in the doorway. She seemed to have come across a stumbling block herself. She had one hand pressed against her forehead, while her sleeve had slid down from her elbow, revealing the pristine white skin of her shoulder. Her brows were knitted together tightly, and the pair of brilliant red eyes below them, purer than even the world's most pristine agate, never once strayed from the book before her. Not far from her, a magic pencil skated about on a sheet of paper. Link narrowed his gaze and saw that the paper was filled with meaningless scribbles.

It would seem that Gretel was at her wit's end.

As Link entered the hall, a few of the Dragon Magicians noticed him and rose to bow before him. Link waved them off and made his way towards the Red Dragon Queen as quietly as possible, his eyes still fixed on the book that she had been reading.

A few seconds later, Link realized that it was a book on extremely advanced magical principles.

Link had read the book before. He knew that the book was titled Advanced Magical Theory, and it contained descriptions and predictions of what would happen in an

environment with a high Mana concentration. It was a must-read on the subject of high-level magical enchantment.

Recalling the hurdles he had come across while reading the book, and looking at which page Gretel was stuck at and the few symbols the magical pencil had written on the piece of paper, Link was able to deduce what problems she was struggling with at the moment.

With a nudge of his will, Link activated the Magician's Hand and took control of Gretel's magic pencil. He then began making his own calculations on the paper with the pencil.

Gretel was so absorbed in her thoughts that she did not react to Link's spell in time. She let out a soft gasp, before realizing that Link was now standing before her. She immediately relinquished her grip on the magical pencil and began looking at Link's calculations.

Magical formulas flowed out from the pencil tip across the paper. The pencil danced on agilely, piecing together Link's thoughts on the paper bit by bit until finally, his solution was given form on it.

Gretel's eyes lit up brighter and brighter throughout the process. She heaved a deep sigh when Link finished writing. "So that's how it is. I've been working on this the whole day."

As she spoke, she gently twitched her finger, and a chair slid noiselessly to her side. "So what brings you here?"

Link sat down and smiled. "Thought I might come by to take a look at the spatial barrier, since I've got the time to spare. And there really is a problem with it."

A satisfied look came across Gretel's face. She got up and said, "You've come back just in time. Come, take a look at the magic seal here."

Saying this, Gretel walked towards the middle of the great hall, with Link following behind her. After taking a few steps, Link sensed that something was off.

Gretel was wearing a rather casual dress today. The almost transparent fabric was form-fitting, revealing an awkward number of details around her body.

As Link walked behind her, he noticed that as she ambled forward, her waist was sweeping out an arc in the air with such fluidity that anyone watching this would want to reach out and feel her waist in their fingers.

The circular motion of her waist seemed almost unreal, mesmerizing even.

Link felt a sudden jolt in his heart, and he immediately shifted his line of sight. He now found himself looking at the long curtain of red hair falling across Gretel's back, and beneath her hair was the dazzlingly white skin of her neck, which stirred his heart even more.

Anyone looking at the Red Dragon Queen's beauty may accidentally blind themselves. If one were to give her a closer look, the effect would be similar to a knockout pill, as they may not want to wake up from such a beautiful dream as her beauty.

In the game, the Red Dragon Queen was described as being "as sweet as the illusion of one's first love." Every day, countless players struggled to complete her quests for three months just to raise their reputations among the dragon race and obtain the right to enter the Dragon Hall.

One could always find almost a thousand players close to her. Wherever she went, there would always be a group of players following close behind her. Such players were jokingly called "the flies hovering around the queen's royal dress."

Link had never noticed it before, but he now had the opportunity to personally experience the Red Dragon Queen's charm.

In order to prevent himself from losing focus, Link shifted his line of sight to the scroll spread out across the table.

Seemingly oblivious to the subtle changes in Link's behavior behind her, she finally reached the table and said, "After cracks had appeared on the rune barrier, I thought it would be best to build an offensive magic seal so that we could immediately eliminate any threats that might come through it, even if the barrier was compromised. At first, I had wanted to begin making a prototype of the seal by myself and have you perfect it later on, but the difficulty of the situation had far exceeded my expectations."

"Let me take a look." Link was now focused on the magic seal that was spread across the long table.

Before long, he was completely immersed in it. He began walking slowly around the table, closely observing the scroll on it. After completing a full circle around the table, he was able to fully grasp the scroll's contents.

He shook his head. "Your Highness, to build a magic seal on such a shaky foundation, no matter how perfect it may be, the seal's power will not reach more than Level-15. Even though it's already at a high enough level, there is no shortage of entities beyond Level-19 in the limitless Sea of Void. To them, a Level-15 attack is nothing more than a mosquito's sting."

As he said this, the Dragon Magicians around took a deep breath and stared in bewilderment at Link. There was no way their measly Level-15 barrier would have deterred these godlike beings from entering their dimension. Such naivety would have spelled the end for the entire dragon race.

Gretel did not seem the least bit disconcerted by this. She raised her brows and gazed at Link, waiting eagerly to hear his thoughts.

With the Magician's Hand, Link rolled up the scroll on the table, and pulled open a new blank scroll. He then willed a magic pencil nearby to start scribbling out his thoughts on the scroll's surface.

He began giving his explanation as he wrote. "I had come up with this concept recently. I'm basically using the singularity phenomenon that would occur in any instance of spatial distortion as its basis."

"Is it a spatial singularity?" asked Gretel curiously.

Link nodded. "That's right. I've been studying the phenomenon closely. It's so small that it defies all conventional methods of measurement, but I theorize that it is capable of containing an unlimited volume of matter inside itself. In theory, if I were to throw a mountain into a singularity, the mountain would be completely contained by it. At that point, the singularity would have the mass of the entire mountain in it."

The singularity he was talking about was in some respects identical to the black holes of his home world, but due to the differences in the physical laws governing the two worlds, there were some stark differences between them. One such difference was that the singularity could be manipulated and was less powerful than the black holes in Link's home world.

Gretel was mesmerized by Link's description. She then asked, "So is there a way to safely release the power contained within a singularity?"

"I'll need to start by explaining the state of the singularity. In a singularity, all matter that exists in Firuman will be transformed into a pure energy state. It's like a cloud of gas being compressed continuously into an infinitesimal point in space. Under such conditions, when the distorted space returns to normal, all the matter compressed within the singularity will burst forth instantaneously in an explosion of limitless energy... Your Highness, if we're to release the energy contained within a 10,000-ton rock, I guarantee you the resulting explosion would decimate half of Firuman!"

Link's words elicited gasps of shock around him.

"My god, that's horrifying!"

"Is that true, my lord?"

The Dragon Magicians were all staring at Link incredulously.

"Yes, it is." Link nodded and continued, "Of course, to subject a huge rock to a singularity's compression has its own difficulties. One might say it's impossible to do such a thing, and for the sake of all of Firuman, let's hope we never need to take such risks. However, it is possible to compress a ton of energy, or maybe even ten, and then set up a couple of runes to regulate the energy output. The explosion would then be directed into the spatial crack. Anything behind the crack would think twice before coming through it into our world."

In this world, destruction was always easier than creation.

Link's current power level was at Level-11. This was due to the fact that the power within him was pure life energy and all life energy could be wielded to create. Though his power was growing at a somewhat slow rate, this did not mean that he was incapable of using anything beyond Level-11.

One of the many advantages all intelligent life had at their disposal is the ability to make and use tools to accomplish something. An example of such a tool would be a magic wand.

As he explained his theories to everyone in the room, Link had finally finished a complicated sketch of his spatial design on the scroll. At a glance, the whole thing

seemed like a work of art, but with a closer look, it was so intricately designed that if anyone had risked looking at it any longer, he or she would probably feel the urge to tear out their eyes.

Some of the Magicians around the table stared at Link's work, trying to grasp the underlying principle behind the whole thing, while others simply gave up.

The only person who was able to comprehend it was the Red Dragon Queen herself.

As she finished looking it over, her eyes flashed in excitement. "This is the nucleus of the singularity. How do you intend to control its energy?"

The singularity was not enough by itself. The energy within would explode in a sphere. The farther it traveled, its impact would be greatly lessened. Still, the resulting shockwave would affect the Dragon Magicians around the magic seal.

Though the singularity may be a powerful source of energy, the regulating seals around it would play an even more critical role later on.

It would require an extremely refined technique to keep such a violent output of energy under control.

Link spread his hands and said ruefully, "I have a general outline of how to go about solving the energy regulation problem, but I still haven't figured out how to actually carry out the solution."

Gretel said consolingly, "A general outline is all we need now. Alright, we're done for today. I'll finish up everything with Duke Link later on."

Though there were 20 Dragon Magicians in the great hall, from the queen's point of view, none of them held a candle to Link.

Chapter 497

Cook a Pot of Mixed Stew

Creation Hall

"Come, come, Link. Tell me your idea now." Red Queen Gretel had some knowledge of spatial singularities and knew the difficulty in restricting the power. Thus, she was interested in Link's idea of control.

She pulled two chairs over and placed them beside each other next to the long table in the center. She sat on the one on the right.

Link thought this wasn't suitable, but he had no need to mention these small details to the queen. He sat onto the chair on the left and took out his notes. Opening it, he gathered his thoughts for a bit. Then he started writing his specific train of thought for the control.

After writing for a while, he felt something on his right arm. Something soft was pressed against it. He also smelled a vague fragrance. It was soft and sweet, making him want to keep smelling it.

Link groaned inwardly. He didn't know if Gretel was doing this on purpose or not, but she was leaning against him to look at his notes. He couldn't focus like this at all. His pen stopped moving unconsciously.

"Hey, continue. Why did you stop?"

Gretel's voice rang right in Link's ear. A warm breath touched his ear too. Link felt that if he turned his head, his lips would be less than ten centimeters from her face.

After freezing for a moment, Link slowly sighed. He collected his mind bit by bit. A few seconds later, he exhaled softly. No distractions remained anymore. No matter what happened in the outside world, he would be focused on his thoughts.

Slowly, Link forgot about the Red Dragon Queen beside him. He was completely immersed in his world of magic. With magic runes, he described a huge yet detailed

magic building.

Seeing him like this, Gretel pouted a little. She felt bored. Flirting was only fun if the other party reacted, but Link had turned into a piece of wood now. She couldn't do anything to wood.

However, this was just a fleeting moment of interest. Her focus was quickly attracted by the magic thoughts that kept flowing out of Link's pen.

According to Link, this was a spell that could control explosive energy. Based on regular logic, one needed to construct energy, or object that could be even more controlled or consolidated to control this energy.

There was a problem.

Gretel was clear that a singularity's explosion was probably the most terrifying explosion of power in a realm. There was nothing more powerful than it in the world. In that case, nothing could control it.

Thus, a singularity's explosion was destructive and using this method was like a suicidal attack.

She wanted to see how Link could control it.

As she kept reading, she felt something off. In the notes, Link didn't build a power that surpassed the realm's limit to forcefully control the energy of the explosion. He used a strange thought—so strange that she couldn't really understand it.

Though she couldn't understand it, she could still clearly feel that the magic building Link described was beautiful. All Mana formulas were clear-cut. The logic of the entire process was impressive too. After reading it, she subconsciously felt like this was the truth of the world.

Link took three hours to write his thoughts clearly on paper. When he was finally done, he breathed deeply and stretched. Looking at his product, he was satisfied.

Recently, he'd researched various magic books, and this idea had been turning in his mind. Using this chance, he organized them all and laid it all out on paper, creating a highly feasible control magic seal.

To be honest, he thought that his product was perfect after writing it down. He felt exhilarated, just like the feeling of using all his energy while exercising.

But his action caused a problem.

A soft sound came from his side. Then Link felt something touch his arm. Shocked, he turned his head and felt his lips brush past something warm and soft.

It was the Red Dragon Queen Gretel. She was still reading beside him, but Link had forgotten about her. His arm ended up touching her forehead. When he turned his head, his lips touched hers.

Link froze. It was just a touch, but his lips felt like it had been shocked electrically. They were numb, soft, and slippery. He could keep indulging in it.

"I... it wasn't on purpose," Link hurriedly explained.

"Oh. So you don't dare to kiss me anymore?" Gretel whispered in reply. Her red eyes were filled with ambiguous light.

What could Link say? He was so awkward he just stood up and moved to the side. Changing the topic, he said, "Your Highness, I wrote all my thoughts in this notebook. What do you think?"

Gretel cocked her head and supported it with her hand. Looking up, she smiled and said, "I read the notes already, but I don't really understand. Come sit down and explain to me."

Link couldn't sit there anymore. He wasn't that innocent. If he sat down, something would happen. If he gave into his hormones now, he would be too ashamed to face Celine back in Ferde.

Sweating slightly, Link remained standing. "Your Highness, I remember everything in the notes. If you can't understand something, just ask, and I can answer."

Seeing him like this, Gretel sighed. "If only I met you before Celine," she muttered.

With that, she stopped the flirting and stated, "I saw your magic model. Are you using the power of time?"

Now that they were talking about magic, Link calmed down. He nodded. "Indeed. Your Highness, look here. The flood of energy when a singularity explodes is already the limit of the realm. In Firuman, no power or object can restrain this flood. Not even space itself can. The only solution is to use the future to influence the present... No, more accurately, it's using the future to restrict the present and use time to restrict the direction of this flood!"

Using the future to restrict the present sounded iffy, but this happened often in real life.

For example, if someone set the goal of becoming rich in three years, the future goal would continuously affect his actions now. Of course, this was the weakest type of influence. It could be interfered with or broken at any time.

Link wanted to use his knowledge of the time laws and continuously strengthen this restrictive power until it was strong enough to turn a singularity's directed explosion into fate!

He couldn't do this with his own knowledge, but it was okay. He now had a ready-made time tool. It was the thin piece of time Skinorse had given him.

With this piece as the core, Link would improve upon it and create a usable control magic seal.

Link explained all of this to Gretel. At the end, he took out the black piece of time. "Your Highness, look at this. This is the true core."

Gretel studied this pure black object. "According to you, this piece is too weak. Are you going to keep feeding it the Jogu you mentioned?" she asked.

Link shook his head. "No, not Jogus. Your Highness, look at the outer magic seal I designed. Most of it is used for strengthening the piece of time. Look here. After the singularity explodes, the horrible power will turn all existence into nothingness. Time, space, and material will all turn into pure energy. It won't be distinguishable. I call this state 'chaos'!"

This was similar to the Grand Unification Theories from Earth. Link didn't know why this would happen. He'd just calculated and naturally came to this result.

Gretel grew more interested. Her eyes glittered, totally different from the watery light

when she was flirting. This was the desire for knowledge.

She sat up straight. "Chaos? Explain in detail."

Link thought a bit and used a metaphor, "Your Highness, it's like stewing a pot of potato and beef stew. The materials are the potatoes and beef. Time and space are like the water in the pot. The energy from the singularity explosion is like the fire under the pot. When the fire is burning, and the temperature is very high, everything in the pot will turn into a thick stew. You can't distinguish anything from each other. That's the state the moment after a singularity explosion—an indistinguishable pot of stew."

"Oh, then what?" Gretel quickly asked.

"Then this extreme energy will expand and cool. Once it cools, things will change. The melted time will first become solid from the stew. This will happen one-billionth of a second after the explosion. That moment is the best time for control... Look at this magic seal."

As Link spoke, he quickly drew a magic seal in the air. "The cooled power of time will be detected by the magic seal and surge into the piece of time. Within one-millionth of a second, the piece's power will multiply tens of thousands of times. It is enough to turn the slightly cooled explosive energy's direction into an inextinguishable fate!"

This time, Link explained everything clearly, and Gretel understood. She was deeply impressed. "Then what level do you think this attack would be at?"

Link thought for a bit and said, "The power of time is the most mysterious type of strength. It is also the existence closest to the source of the realm. Applying the current levels, when it is heated to a chaotic state, it will definitely be above Level-29. When the explosive energy cools slightly and the power of time is isolated, it will be around Level-26. Thus, our final energy supply will reach Level-26. Even a god would fear this power!"

To a Magician, the levels of power were clear because any type of power, even a god's power, could find its relative phenomenon in the world. It could even be calculated on paper with simple logic.

For example, the instant a singularity exploded, its power would technically be at Level-30. This was the pinnacle of the godly domain!

Of course, there was still a long way to go between knowing its existence and completely controlling and manipulating it. It was like how a mortal could see the sun and feel its mightiness, but they couldn't become the sun.

Link being able to create a Level-26 attack wasn't because he himself was so powerful. It was because of this piece of time in his hands that he couldn't even comprehend.

Without this, everything Link had done would be all in vain.

Gretel knew this, but to her, Link was still amazing. Looking at the thin black piece, she asked, "If your idea can be realized, the spatial crack won't be a threat anymore. However, I can feel that your model isn't perfected. The details are rough."

"Indeed." Link nodded. "The most critical part is that we need materials with a very high heat resistance."

Gretel was confused. "High heat resistance... But nothing can stop a singularity's explosion, right?"

Link shook his head and explained, "No, no, Your Highness. The material isn't to stop the high temperature of the explosions. It's just a buffer. It must buffer the energy for one-billionth of a second. Otherwise, I'm afraid the time piece won't be able to absorb the power of time. It'll evaporate instantly."

Gretel nodded. Thinking a bit, she said, "I know a place that will definitely have the material you need, but it's dangerous."

"Tell me." Link's eyes lit up.

"The Sea of Void. All types of astral rocks float in there. One of them will satisfy your needs."

"The Sea of Void... But I can't go in now..." His dragon form hadn't recovered yet. Without turning into a dragon, he wouldn't have the Void Ferry. He could at most open a realm portal, but he wouldn't be able to enter the Sea of Void.

"But I can go and take you with me too. The dragon form is the Void Ferry. There's no problem in taking someone in," Gretel answered, smiling.

"How?" Link rubbed his forehead in confusion. The dragon form had completely fused

with each person.

"You'll see," Gretel said mysteriously.

Chapter 498

The Centipede in the Sea of Void

The Dragon Square

The Red Dragon Queen transformed into her dragon form. Before letting Link ride on her back, she turned to him and said, "Now close your eyes."

"Why?" asked Link curiously. Still, he closed his eyes shut.

"I'll need to swallow you down my dragon body. The whole body may seem a bit disturbing, and I don't really want to show you my horrible fangs. You'll probably hate me for that. You know what, it's probably not enough that you close your eyes, I'll need to cast a Numbing spell on you."

As she spoke, Link felt Gretel's Dragon Power over him. She must have already cast her spell on him.

The spell instantly dulled all of Link's senses. Not only had his surroundings gone dark, but he also could not hear or feel anything around him as well. Link then felt himself being lifted up and sliding down a warm tube.

Five seconds later, the Red Dragon Queen's voice could be heard once more. "Alright, you can open your eyes now."

When Link opened his eyes, he found himself swimming in a mass of unknown liquid. Around him was a hazy blur of red light, and extraordinarily enough, he noticed that he could breathe regularly in the liquid without any risk of suffocation.

The sensation was almost like being back in his mother's womb.

With a sudden snap, the hazy blur of red light around Link had vanished, and in its place was a magic mirror providing a full view of what the Red Dragon Queen was seeing at the moment.

"Can you see it?" Gretel's voice rumbled from outside.

"Yes, I can see everything clearly, it's an amazing sight," exclaimed Link. He had never felt such comfort in the womb-like chamber. It seemed like such a great place to just lie back and take a nap for as long as he wanted.

Gretel's voice rumbled again, this time with a hint of satisfaction, "It's called a vesicle. It was originally used to accommodate passengers. After generations of evolution, though it still retains its function as a compartment for passengers, we've stopped letting outsiders use it."

"If that's the case, why bother keeping it? I think the vesicle's maintenance requires a large amount of energy input." It was one of Link's many quirks; whenever something seemed illogical to him, he would try to make sense out of it through logical reasoning.

Gretel laughed without actually giving Link an answer. "Alright, enough questions for now. I'm taking off!"

Through the magical view in the vesicle, Link could see luminescent ripples in the air before Gretel. She then took a large step forward, and her large dragon body melted through the ripples.

In the outside world, Link could see cracks radiating out in huge numbers across the green tiles in the square. This was the result of spatial vibrations continuously being sent out from the dragon's body. It was almost trivial compared to the effects of Realm Transference.

Two seconds later, Gretel's body had completely submerged into the spatial depths. Crimson Dragon Power cloaked her whole body, giving her the appearance of a gleaming crystal dragon.

They were immediately beset by a fantastic sight around them, brilliant silhouettes dancing around the spatial canvas of Firuman's inner regions. As they waded deeper through space, the light around them gradually faded. Before long, they were completely immersed in darkness.

The whole process was not unlike diving into an ocean's depths. The only difference was that a diver would eventually hit the bottom of the ocean, whereas in the farthest regions of space stood the wall between realms. Behind that wall lay the Sea of Void.

The Space Barrier in the Dragon Valley was nigh impenetrable, especially around the Dragon Temple. It acted as a deterrent against any attempts to invade from the Sea of

Void.

Carrying Link inside her, Gretel swam on downwards for more than one minute. Darkness had utterly consumed them at that moment. Then, Link saw a glimmer of light before him. The Red Dragon Queen spoke, "Alright, we're in the Sea of Void."

From the magical view, Link could see that a white fog had surrounded the Red Dragon Queen's body, obscuring her vision terribly. Through the fog, sudden streaks of light flashed by at times. Link could also make out a couple of vortexes spinning in the distance.

Behind the Red Dragon Queen was a huge body of light. Due to the white fog around her, none of them could make out the exact appearance of the object, but Link knew that it was the realm of Firuman itself.

"Alright, I'm going to move forward. Visibility is low, and there may be danger lurking about, so I'll need to concentrate on my flying. If there's a meteorite heading our way, you need to tell me," Gretel said.

"Understood," said Link. He then noticed that Gretel had begun flying away from the realm of Firuman. The road ahead of them was a blur fraught with all kinds of danger. Not daring to let anything distract him for even a moment, Link kept his eyes wide open as he surveyed his surroundings throughout their journey.

The Red Dragon Queen floated slowly forward through the Sea. Around five minutes later (all measurements of time were carried out by Link at this point with the realm of Firuman as his reference point, since the concept of time itself was essentially meaningless in the Sea of Void), Link noticed that the realm of Firuman had completely vanished from sight behind them. They were now surrounded in every direction by hazy balls of light and energy.

In such a place, one could lose their bearings easily without a reference point in space, and would probably drift on through the Sea of Void with no end in sight. Link suddenly remembered the sages of old who had fled from Firuman must have floated through the Sea of Void for months before finally managing to find their way back to the realm of Firuman. Such a feat was nothing short of a miracle.

The Red Dragon Queen had slowed down considerably. She was now feeling even more nervous at this point. Link could feel her heart beating even more uncontrollably,

raising the temperature in the womb as a result.

"Link, do you see something?" Gretel's voice sounded.

"No, nothing but those balls of energy around us. I don't see anything concrete." Link had been scanning the magical view attentively, but still could not find a single piece of meteorite anywhere around them.

Gretel continued flying forward.

Soon after, Link suddenly saw a black shadow flit through the white fog. He strained his eyes in its direction, but could not make anything out.

"I think I see something moving," whispered Link.

Gretel's pulse accelerated even more. She slowed down, and her body took on a more defensive posture. "I sense it, too. It's probably alive. I could feel it staring at me."

Gretel was now feeling even more nervous. She did not have much experience making trips through the Sea of Void.

"Why don't we turn back now? Once my dragon body is fully recovered, we can go back into the Sea of Void together. Besides, we only need to wait for another three months till my dragon body heals up completely, which isn't that long," proposed Link. It was too dangerous to go on at this point, especially with an unidentified object leering at them from a distance. If Link was able to transform into his dragon form, he could still be of some use to the Red Dragon Queen in the Sea of Void.

As for the Astral Meteorite, they did not need to find it straight away. They were probably bound to find some after making a few more trips into the Sea of Void.

Gretel fell silent for a moment. She then spoke, "Alright then, it's a shame we didn't find any meteorites."

Feeling the coordinates of Firuman, she began making her way back towards it. An hour later, all of a sudden, a black figure bolted through the fog and collided against Gretel's body.

Thanks to Gretel's alertness, when the black figure appeared, she immediately leaned to one side and spat out her Dragon Void Breath at it.

All this had been carried out by Gretel in one fluid motion, and the black figure received the full brunt of her attack.

The Red Dragon Queen's Dragon Void Breath had a diameter of more than five feet. Its energy was pristine white and extremely concentrated. When the blast of energy hit the black figure, its speed was drastically reduced.

However, instead of being pushed back, it persevered on bit by bit through the rush of energy from Gretel's jaws.

As it pushed on towards Gretel, Link managed to see the entity's shape clearly. Its body was a greyish color, and it resembled a giant centipede. Its long, narrow body was around 50 feet and lined with countless black slender legs on both sides.

Its legs did not seem to be made for walking, but rather served as narrow lines of oars pushing the black shape through the Sea of Void.

Link was stunned. He had seen such a creature before, back in the game, but the creature before him right now was considerably larger than its counterpart in the game.

Back in the game, players simply referred to it as a centipede, but it was a hundred times more venomous than any ordinary centipede.

"Be careful with its legs, Your Highness..." Link did not finish his sentence.

Gretel had swung her tail at the centipede, which was now 60 feet away from her.

The centipede's movements were severely restricted as it was still being bombarded by the Red Dragon Queen's Void Breath. As a result, it was unable to dodge her tail in time and took a direct hit from it.

Link saw that the centipede's body was struck by the dragon tail with such force that greyish shards broke off from one side of its body. Some of its legs had also been torn off by the impact.

On the surface, it seemed as though the Red Dragon Queen now had the upper hand. However, Link sensed that something was wrong, and shouted, "Your Highness, watch out for its stingers!"

Saying this, Link pressed a hand on the vesicle, and a rush of Dragon Power flowed through Gretel's body in an instant.

His Dragon Power had come from Gretel. Though its state had undergone some changes, it was still able to merge with Gretel's Dragon Power. His Maximum Dragon Power had now reached 14500, whereas Gretel's was more than 20,000. There was no chance the combined Dragon Power from two masters would lose to a Level-14 Legendary entity.

Though Gretel did not know why Link had issued such a warning, she did not dare let down her guard. With a hum, a Legendary-level crimson barrier had formed around her. She too began focusing her Dragon Power into the barrier.

The centipede let out a screech, and all of a sudden, ripples of violent black energy emerged around it. What was even more frightening was the fact that the black, slender legs around it shot out like missiles in all directions towards Gretel.

Link was able to see the black smoke issued out in the wake of each of its missile-like legs. He knew that the smoke contained its poison. Not only was it capable of corroding through flesh, but it could also melt through pure energy.

The creature's legs barraged against the barrier relentlessly, peeling it layer after layer. It was as thin as paper by the time the twentieth leg struck the barrier.

"Its black smoke is melting through my energy barrier!" Gretel shouted in a panic. She let out another burst of her dragon breath at the centipede.

This time, her attack was effective.

After laying siege on Gretel's barrier with its legs, the centipede had depleted most of its strength. It was blown back by the blast of Dragon Void Breath, and vanished into the depths of the Sea of Void.

Gretel did not wish to prolong their fight any longer and immediately sped off towards the realm of Firuman.

After a while, she let out a panicked shout. "Not good, my tail's been hit by one of the creature's stingers!"

Link looked back and saw that there were indeed two black stingers stuck to her tail.

Even with the protection of her dragon scales, the tip of the stingers had pierced into her skin.

She must have been stung when she had swung her tail at the centipede.

The venom was indeed potent. Gretel shouted in pain, and Link saw that her vision was beginning to blur. Her flight path too was becoming even more erratic.

"Are you alright?" Link could feel that Gretel's Dragon Power was receding rapidly. He began to panic and continued to pour some of his Dragon Power into Gretel's body.

"The venom's eating up my power. No, it's also messing with my mind..."

The situation seemed to worsen by the minute. However, curiously enough, Link noticed that the venom had not entered the vesicle. He felt just fine even as he breathed in the liquid around him.

At that moment, Link saw a black shape floating in the distance. He immediately shouted, "Look, there's a meteorite to your side!"

Still able to hear him, the Red Dragon Queen looked around and noticed the meteorite as well. She managed to grab it in her claw, and like a drunkard, continued her path shakily towards Firuman.

Half an hour later, a huge expanse of light came up before them. It was the realm of Firuman.

Gretel's condition had worsened to the point where she was now unable to distinguish left and right. In the end, she clumsily burst through the spatial wall of Firuman.

After swimming through space for three minutes, both of them finally reached Firuman.

Through what was left of the vesicle's magical view, Link saw that they were now thousands of feet above ground. Below them, however, was not Dragon Valley, but rather a huge island in the middle of an ocean. A dense forest covered the island, with a few signs of civilization here and there. The architectural style around the island was unlike anything they had seen on the continent. Without warning, the vesicle's magical view disappeared before Link.

"I'm out of energy. I'm afraid I won't be able to make a safe landing. You'd better come out from there, Link."

A hole appeared in the vesicle. Without thinking too much about it, Link jumped straight into the hole.

As he climbed out of the hole, Link understood why Gretel had wanted to block off all his senses before swallowing him up. The sensation of crawling through a sticky, dark meat tunnel was not something Link would soon forget.

Chapter 499

Queen's Crisis, a Close Call

After crawling in the dark tunnel for a long while, Link finally reached the Red Dragon Queen's mouth. There were huge fangs all around him. Three layers glinted coldly and overlapped like a forest of blades. It was indeed the mouth of a beast.

Link had only taken a glance before the tongue under his feet suddenly moved and pushed him out the mouth.

Once outside, Link immediately cast a cleansing spell to get rid of the saliva on him. On the other hand, the Red Dragon Queen's body flashed with red light. Under this light, her body kept shrinking until she looked as she did in the Creation Hall.

There were two things with her too. One was a dark purple rock the size of a skull; the other was two poisonous thorns. It had fallen off of the dragon form.

Gretel's face was ghastly pale. She was dazed too and had completely free fell from the sky.

Link quickly went to catch her while collecting the dark purple astral rock and thorns. He'd already used all his strength in blocking the thorns but thankfully, he wasn't poisoned. His Dragon Power recovered quickly as well. Right now, he already gained 1000 points.

Activating the Void Walk, Link went towards the ground.

He only knew that he was inside the Firuman Realm but he didn't know the specific location. There was a large island with residents below. He prepared to go ask them. However, he wasn't familiar with the situation here and didn't want to appear suddenly. He cast an Invisibility spell on them both before descending.

The island was truly large. Even from tens of thousands of feet in the sky and with a dragon's amazing vision, Link could barely see the borders. This island was probably more than 300 miles wide.

While descending, Link checked Gretel's state.

Her body was limp as if she didn't have an ounce of power left. Her eyelids were half-closed but her eyes moved slightly. This meant she was still conscious. However, her Dragon Power aura was very faint. Other than her Dragon Power, a powerful Void aura radiated from her.

These were the classic symptoms of being poisoned. After a player was poisoned in the game, a Magician's Mana bar or a Warrior's Battle Aura would keep getting eroded until it disappeared. Then it would turn into something called the Chaotic Rot.

The poisoned would die at this time and become a puppet controlled by the Chaotic Rot. The poisonous centipede had two choices. One was to absorb the Chaotic Rot and transform it into its own power. The second was to keep it as its slave and eat when needed.

The Void Centipede's poison was very unique. All antidotes in Firuman were ineffective against it. However, Link knew two ways to detoxify it.

The first was the orthodox method. He would use a new antidote. There was a mission in the game that described how an alchemist experimented on a poisoned person to find the antidote. The player's mission was to collect all the materials for the alchemist.

This was the best solution; it could completely eradicate the poison. However, Link didn't know the recipe and specific method of creating the antidote. He was mostly clueless about advanced alchemy. He had to scrap this idea.

The other solution was to seal it. He could seal all the contaminated power with a spell. However, the poisoned would lose all power and become an average person.

This solution couldn't eradicate the poison; it could only buffer it.

"Your Highness, how do you feel?" Link asked.

"I can't control my body. My power is completely eroded." Gretel's voice was as quiet as a mosquito.

Clearly, this poisoner's power was extremely strong. The poison effect was abnormally intense too. Even a Level-11 Legendary figure couldn't withstand it.

Link stopped the Void Walk and changed to a falling spell that was easier on his mind. He carried Gretel bridal style and opened her eyes to check the situation.

Her eyes used to be red and white; they were beautiful. Now, the red iris was unchanged but black vessels appeared in the white part. She was deeply poisoned. If he didn't use the sealing spell quickly, Gretel would probably lose consciousness.

During this time, another 1000 Dragon Power points had recovered. He didn't know specific sealing spells but he'd saved 800 Omni Points.

Open spell list, Link thought.

His vision flashed. Countless spell cards shone before him; they were all Legendary cards. Link scanned them and quickly found what he needed.

Void Shackle

Level-12 Legendary Spell

Cost: 13000 Dragon Power points

Effect: Use unparalleled strength to create a special shackling magic. It can seal any type of power in the world and is impossible to open.

(Note: Other than the spell-caster, no one can undo the seal.)

Link had around 2000 Dragon Power points now and was recovering at a rate of 39 points per second. He'd also activated the recovery effect of the Dragon King Belt. It would take around three minutes to reach 11000 Dragon Power points.

This wasn't too long but Link worried that Gretel couldn't survive until then. He checked her eyes again. There were more black vessels. The crystal-red irises were slightly contaminated too, turning dark red.

Link knew that when her eyes turned pure black, Gretel would become a puppet. Judging from the speed that the poison was spreading, she might not last until Link could cast the spell.

The most important thing now was to keep Gretel's consciousness strong. She couldn't defeat the poison with a strong desire to live, but she could at least delay it.

"Your Highness," Link murmured comfortingly. "You are in extreme danger but I have a way to cure you. I just need time to regenerate Dragon Power..."

Gretel's eyes were still half-closed. "Link," she mumbled. "It's eating away at me. I can't keep going. I see the boundless darkness."

Link grew anxious. Grasping her hand, he exclaimed, "Your Majesty, can you hear me? I can cure you!"

"I'm not Your Majesty. Call me Tellie."

Her voice was very soft but still clear enough. Link hesitated a bit before saying, "Tellie, do you know when we first met?"

Link changed his tactics. He stopped using flat language to persuade her. Instead, he tried to distract her.

As expected, Gretel was attracted by his words. "Wasn't it in the Dragon Square?"

"No, it wasn't there. It was in my dream."

"Dream?" Gretel's voice was confused but also louder.

"Yes. In the dream, we met in the Delonga Kingdom. At that time, the Norton Kingdom hadn't stopped the Dark Army and the Dark Elves went South with their divine gear. Just as the humans were about to be defeated, you appeared with the Dragon Army. The entire sky was burning with the fire of dragons and you—you were the queen amongst the flames."

Link was describing a scene from the game. It was a video of the Dragon Army joining the battle between light and dark. New careers such as Dragon Warrior and Dragon Magician were opened after that.

In the video, the Red Dragon Queen's appearance was incredible. No one could stop her Dragon Power. She was also gorgeous like an ideal first love and gained many fans. For two consecutive years, she was rated as the most beloved game character. As expected, all gamers would fall for a true queen.

Link thought back to the video and smiled. He was already a Level-9 Magician at that time. He'd seen Milda and Herrera without feeling much but that video really left an

impression.

Clearly, Gretel liked listening to this. "Then what?" she murmured. "Did we talk?"

Link chuckled. "Yes. In my dream, I was just an insignificant Magician. After seeing you, I cried out, 'Your Majesty!' Then you asked me, 'Mortal, what do you want?' I couldn't say anything after that and you left because you were busy. I was so sad."

"Dreams aren't real. I would never... Ah, I'm so dizzy. I see the hallucination. That insect is coming. It's looking at me!" Gretel's voice grew heavier. She was panicking.

Link was a bit shocked. He checked his Dragon Power—it was more than 8000 points now. He would have enough power after one more minute.

The whites of Gretel's eyes were completely black. Her red irises were turning black too. Link couldn't hold back anymore. "Tellie, I have something I've always wanted to say... Are you listening?"

"Yes... I'm listening." Her words were broken but her pale face still filled with anticipation. Her eyes opened a bit wider too. She looked at Link, waiting for him to utter the sentence.

She looked as if she could die in peace after hearing Link say it.

Seeing her like this, Link changed his plan. He couldn't say everything he'd planned. He needed to use this sentence to keep Gretel alive. "Tellie, you are the most elegant, beautiful, and moving woman I've ever seen. In my eyes, you aren't a high and mighty queen..."

To drag out the time, Link spoke very slowly. Half a minute passed with this one sentence. As he spoke, he observed Gretel's reaction. Seeing that she kept staring at him in anticipation, Link was a bit assured. He continued, "Actually, I..."

He stopped here; he looked hesitant.

Gretel waited for five full seconds. She was anxious when Link didn't continue but she didn't have the energy to urge him. She could only grit her teeth and force herself to stay awake so she wouldn't miss it.

Link knew what she was thinking so he just wouldn't say it. One second, two, three...

The seconds ticked by. Eight seconds later, Link had enough Dragon Power.

He was relieved. Looking into Gretel's eyes filled with anticipation, he lowered himself and whispered in her ears, "Tellie, actually, I can save you."

Chapter 500

The Mysterious Island

As he spoke, Link activated the Level-12 sealing spell.

Countless crimson runes issued out from his body like morning mist and entwined themselves around the Red Dragon Queen's body like a cocoon.

This went on for a few seconds until the cocoon of light was now an airtight chamber that rapidly shrank around Gretel's body. At the same time, the Chaotic Rot in her body gradually subsided in her body. One of the most visible changes on her body was her eyes.

The dark power had receded instantly from her almost completely blackened eyes. Gretel's pale face too had regained its color.

Another five seconds later, she drew a long breath, widened her eyes and stared at Link, a perplexed expression on her face. She remained silent for a long while. Then she said, "You... liar!"

Listening to him speak so affectionately before had filled her with so much hope. She thought he was going to finally confess his feelings to her, but it was all an act!

She was now angry and disappointed at him!

Link smiled awkwardly at her. He helped Gretel up, and said, "Your Highness, I wasn't exactly lying to you. I was, in fact, trying to suppress the venom in you."

"How dare you still call me 'Your Highness'!" said Gretel coldly, glancing sideways at him.

Link could only chuckle at this. They had almost reached the ground at this point, and Link did not wish to continue this awkward conversation any longer. He surveyed the forest around them, and asked, "Tellie, I think there's something wrong about this place. I've never seen these kinds of plants before."

He did not recognize any of the plants around him. It was as if they had entered another realm.

Gretel did not mind being called "Tellie" by him since they were the only two people there. Gretel's rage subsided somewhat upon hearing this, and she turned around to observe her surroundings. In an instant, she had forgotten all about her discontent and was now drawn to her strange new surroundings.

"This is new."

Link had only lived for twenty years. Though he may be well read, his knowledge of the world was still limited in comparison to the Red Dragon Queen's. On the other hand, Gretel had lived for 2000 years. Even though she had spent most of that time in Dragon Valley, she had gone on hundreds of trips to the outside world. The longest trip she had taken was with her mother when both of them once flew around Firuman.

She had virtually seen all of Firuman and was more than familiar with most of the islands dotting the great ocean. But the island below them was completely foreign to her.

At that moment, both of them had landed on the ground.

As they landed, there was a sudden squeak from the woods near them. A creature as large as a mouse shot out into the open. Its appearance was exceedingly strange. Link activated the Magician's Hand and held the thing before him.

The thing was no larger than an adult's palm. It resembled somewhat the kangaroos back on earth. Its hind legs were more developed than its front legs, which seemed dexterous enough to act as their hands. It squeaked desperately, struggling to free itself from the invisible hand holding it in the air.

"I've never seen such an animal before," said Gretel, shaking her head.

It was rare indeed for her to not recognize something in the world of Firuman, assuming of course that they were still in Firuman.

Link let go of the mouse-like creature. It immediately scampered back into the woods.

He looked around at his surroundings and saw that the canopy of leaves above them was especially dense. A golden sun hung in the blue sky, which was not at all different

from Firuman's sky.

Link then cast a Detection spell to measure the island's spatial distortion, magical saturation, and chronal speed. Each of these aspects was similar to Firuman's.

"We are indeed on Firuman. If you've never seen this island before, could it be that it had simply floated to the ocean's surface?"

This explanation, ridiculous as it may sound, was their only explanation for the island at the moment.

Gretel thought for a while and could not think of anything to contradict this. She spread her hands and spoke, "Anything can happen in this world. What you just described is possible... Aren't there a couple of buildings on the island? This must mean that there are people living here. Why don't we go and take a look?"

Link had the same idea, but at that moment, Gretel's power had been sealed up. In her current state, she might not be able to defend herself if there was any trouble. He had to think of a way to neutralize the venom completely in her body as soon as possible.

Holding out the Void Centipede's stinger, Link said, "Gretel, the venom running through your body is only temporarily sealed up. To actually remove it, we need to find a more efficacious antidote for it. There's still a bit of venom in the stinger. Can you think of a way to counteract its effect?"

Alchemy was not Link's strongest suit, but the Red Dragon Queen was an expert on the subject. She should be able to come up with something.

Gretel nodded and took out a magically-resistant vial. She then spoke to Link, "Here, pour the venom into this vial."

Link did as he was told and carefully squeezed the remaining venom from the stinger into the vial. Around five ounces of the deadly liquid dripped into it and completely covered the bottom of the vial.

Though the venom emitted a faint black smoke, it was colorless like water and slightly more viscous.

Gretel then took out another vial which contained a viscous, pale blue liquid. She poured a drop of the venom into it. Immediately, the pale blue liquid began bubbling

violently in its vial.

Seeing such a reaction, Gretel explained to Link, "The blue liquid tests a substance's toxicity. The more poisonous something is, the greater its reaction will be."

"So how poisonous is the venom?"

"Very. It's deadlier than any other venom I've ever encountered. It's a miracle I'm still alive." Gretel's face blanched at the thought of the venom still flowing around inside her body.

"Do you have a way to neutralize it?" asked Link.

Gretel shook her head, "I'm not sure; I'll need to run a few more tests."

She then laid out a wide array of bottles and vials from her spatial bracelet and continued running her tests. Her brows relaxed at times and pressed against each other tightly at others.

Half an hour later, a frown came across her face. "I have an idea, but the amount of venom we have right now may not be enough."

Link too frowned at this. He could not expect her to accompany him back to the Sea of Void and face the Void Centipede again. That would be no different from suicide.

After a while, Link remembered something. In the game, he had helped an alchemy master gather some ingredients for the antidote. He still was able to recall what they were.

Even though he had no idea what the master's procedure was, the Red Dragon Queen was, fortunately, an alchemy master. If she were to have the list of the antidote's ingredients, things would probably go even more smoothly.

He pondered for a while on this. Choosing his words carefully, he said to the queen, "Your High... Tellie, I remember reading something about the Void creature in a High Elf book. I think it's called 'Thousand Legs.' There was mention of an antidote, but it only listed its ingredients and said nothing about how to brew the concoction. I don't know if this information is of any use to you."

Hearing this, Gretel's eyes lit up suddenly. "Of course it is! Just tell me."

Link told her what he knew. "Creeping jennies, sunflowers, ginseng, a pinch of arisaema..."

When Link listed out all 13 types of ingredients, Gretel's eyes brightened even more. Finally, she clapped her hands and laughed. "I got it! I'm not too far off from it. Though I'll still need to run those tests, the venom we have in hand should suffice."

Saying this, Gretel began collecting the alchemical ingredients from her surroundings. Link recognized none of the materials she had collected. When she had gathered more than seven materials from the forest, Link asked, "Gretel, the ingredients aren't right."

"You have much to learn. Each of these materials contains a number of medicinal properties. The goal of alchemy is to neutralize the properties that we don't need and strengthen the ones that we do. To produce the medicinal effect that we need, we don't have to follow the ingredient list to the letter. Oh, I'm still short of a few things. Oh well, I'll look for them later. Let's go. We'll visit the village up ahead first. Who knows, we may come across some of the medicinal materials that I'm still missing along the way."

Gretel put away all her ingredients. She dusted off her hands and looked at Link, ready to head out.

With the problem of the antidote more or less settled, Link now felt even more relieved. During their conversation, he had almost fully recovered his Dragon Power. He was now able to deal with any threats in their way.

The two of them then headed off in the direction that they had determined from the air.

A while later, Gretel patted her legs and sighed. "Ow, how tiring. This is taking forever."

Link was speechless at such an obvious hint from her.

For the rest of the journey, Link gave Gretel a piggyback ride.

They now made their way through the forest even more quickly than before. Ten minutes later, the woods in front of them had become sparser. Through them, Link could see a simple stone wall erected up ahead. Behind the piles of rocks stood a neat row of wooden houses. The sounds of chickens and the occasional barks of a dog could be heard. Columns of smoke drifted from the wooden houses into the evening sky.

"It seems peaceful," said Gretel.

Link too felt the same way about the place, but there was still something odd about it. "The architecture here seems strange. I've never seen it before. I don't really know why, but I'm getting an ominous feeling about the place."

He did not feel that their lives were being directly threatened at the moment, but the feeling was enough to make him feel uncomfortable about the place.

With her power being sealed off, Gretel's senses were not as acute as Link's. Hearing this from Link, she said thoughtfully, "It looks somewhat similar to the architectural style adopted 1000 years ago by the southern kingdom."

As they observed the place, a troop of human-shaped figures marched out from another corner of the forest. Link was startled by what he saw.

"Are those... demons?"



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